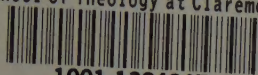


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THE

BIBLE - WORK.

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

VOL. VIII.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations.

THE REVISED TEXT ; WITH CRITICAL EXPOSITION, AND COMMENTS SELECTED FROM THE CHOICEST
MOST ILLUMINATING AND HELPFUL THOUGHT OF THE CHRISTIAN CENTURIES.

PREPARED BY

J. GLENTWORTH BUTLER, D.D.

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SUGGESTIONS RESPECTING VOLUMES VIII. AND IX.

THE simplest classification of the Old Testament Books is threefold : 1. Seventeen Historical. 2. Five Ethical and Spiritual. 3. Seventeen Prophetical. In this Work the seventeen Historical Books are treated in Volumes I., II., III., and VII. ; the five middle Books in Volumes IV., V., VI. ; and the seventeen Prophetical Books in Volumes VIII. and IX.

Noting thus the *place* of these closing Books, the general reader is further reminded that these seventeen Books of Prophecy are largely and closely related to the History contained in Volume VII.—that is, to the history of the People of Israel from the Division of Solomon's Kingdom to and through the Captivity and Return of Judah, with traces of reference to events of the after history up to the Advent of Christ. Hence, in these two Prophetical volumes (VIII. and IX.) will be found a continual reference to the pages of Volume VII., as well as succinct statements of the main historical events with which the several Prophets have to do. The reader, therefore, who would thoroughly grasp their meaning must carefully study and compare the prophecy and the history at every step.

It is to be further noted, that the ultimate and highest teachings of these seventeen Prophets far outreach the period of Messiah's Advent. Their supreme purpose and most essential disclosures cover the great facts of that Advent, including the Person and office-work of the promised Redeemer, while they further traverse the broad range of events to the close of the Christian Dispensation, and clearly interpret the vital meaning of that Dispensation.

Another suggestion may be helpful to readers who may have been somewhat wearied by the very frequent reiteration of the same charges and threatenings, entreaties and promises which occur in almost all of these Prophecies. A sufficient reason and justification of these oft-repeated statements is found in the fact that through the history of more than five centuries the same spirit of disobedience and rebellion characterized all the successive generations of God's chosen people. But another, and to us more helpful reason for this seeming redundancy of warning and promise, may be found in the fact that therein we are furnished with cumulative evidence and proof of Jehovah's kind and gracious intent toward His people through those long ages, an evidence and proof equally needed and applicable in all subsequent ages until now. Nowhere else can we find so instructive and impressive a series of lessons touching man's natural disobedience and dislike of God, and God's forbearing and forgiving mercy toward man. These considerations fully justify, while they demand our deepest gratitude for, every line of prophetic denunciation, entreaty and promise.

It may be added, in reference to the treatment of these Prophetic Books, that a considerable portion of the text, consisting largely of repetitions or enlargements of main themes or statements, has required and received but little attention. But the great themes and events of prophecy with their lessons, together with the many high and helpful spiritual truths suggested therein, are fully set forth in these pages.

PROPHET AND PROPHECY.

THE primary concept of the word "prophet" is that of announcer, or forth-speaker. The prophet is one who speaks in the place of God, who conveys God's word to men, who is an interpreter of God to men. W. L. A.—A prophet is a man specially called and sent by God to communicate a Divine revelation. This is apparent from the names given to those Divine messengers. They are called prophets, seers, men of God, men of the Spirit. The Hebrew word for prophet ("nabi") and the English word as used in the Old Testament are fully explained by a comparison of two passages in the Book of Exodus—7:1 and 4:16. Moses was to be as God to Aaron, Aaron as prophet, mouth, or spokesman to Moses; Moses to communicate to Aaron, and Aaron to declare the message. According to this, prophet means the declarer or interpreter of the Divine will. He is one who does not speak of himself, the workings of his own mind, but declares the mind and will of God, and speaks what he receives from without. To declare the will of God and deliver His message, whether it regarded the past, the present or the future, was the prophet's great duty. To have received a call and message direct from God, and to deliver it, constituted the essence of prophetism. A. McCaul.

The etymology of "nabi" and the cognate verbal forms makes it impossible to look upon foresight or prediction as their primary and necessary import. The only derivation which can now be regarded as philologically tenable is that which makes the word originally signify the act of pouring forth or uttering, a natural figure in all languages for speech, and more especially for public, solemn and continuous discourse. In actual usage, the Hebrew words are admitted by modern writers of all schools and creeds to signify specifically one who speaks (or the act of speaking) for God, not only in His name and by His authority, but under His influence—in other words, by Divine inspiration. A complete induction of particulars would show, with scarcely the appearance of a doubtful case or an exception, that the

essential idea, running through the whole Hebrew usage of the verb and noun, is that of inspiration.

Another obvious deduction from the usage of the language is, that although "nabi," like many other terms of such perpetual occurrence, is employed both in a wider and a more restricted sense, the distinction thus made is not that between inspiration in general and the foresight of the future in particular. There is probably not a single instance in which the word denotes the latter, except as one important function of the power which it properly describes. The gift of prophecy included that of prophetic foresight, but it included more. The prophet was inspired to reveal the will of God, to act as an organ of communication between God and man. The subject of the revelations thus conveyed embraced the past and present, and extended to those absolute and universal truths which have no relation to time. This is what we should expect *a priori* in a Divine revelation, and it is what we actually find it to contain. That the prophets of the old dispensation were not mere foretellers of things future is apparent from their history as well as from their writings. The historical argument is stated forcibly by Gill when he observes that Daniel proved himself a prophet by telling Nebuchadnezzar what he had dreamed, as much as by interpreting the dream itself; that it was only by prophetic inspiration that Elijah knew what Gehazi had been doing; and that the woman of Samaria very properly called Christ a prophet, because He told her all things that ever she did. In all these cases, and in multitudes of others, the essential idea is that of inspiration, its frequent reference to things still future being accidental—*i.e.*, not included in the uniform and necessary import of the terms.

With respect to the nature of the inspiration under which these prophets spoke and acted, there can be no doubt that the Bible itself represents it as plenary, or fully adequate to the attainment of its end (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21). Where this end was external action, it

was sufficiently secured by the gift of courage, strength and practical wisdom. Where the instruction of God's people was the object, whether in reference to the past, the present or the future ; whether in word, in writing, or in both ; whether for temporary ends, or with a view to perpetual preservation, the prophets are clearly represented as infallible—*i.e.*, incapable of erring or deceiving, with respect to the matter of their revelation. How far this object was secured by direct suggestion, by negative control, or by an elevating influence upon the native powers, is a question of no practical importance to those who hold the essential doctrine that the inspiration was in all cases such as to render those who were inspired infallible. Between this supposition and the opposite extreme, which denies inspiration altogether, or resolves it into mere excitement of the imagination and the sensibilities, like the afflatus of a poet or an orator, there seems to be no definite and safe position. Either the prophets were not inspired at all in any proper sense, or they were so inspired as to be infallible. As to the mode in which the required impression was made, it seems both vain and needless to attempt any definite description of it. The ultimate effect would be the same in any case, if not upon the prophet, upon those who heard or read his prophecies. This whole question is rather one of curiosity than use, even in reference to interpretation. A.

The prophets as an order were penetrated with a sense of responsibility to a Divine commission. They professedly spoke and acted in obedience to its commands. There is no one of the sixteen prophetic books which does not bear witness to the truth of this assertion. Each writer rests upon his own individual consciousness of a mission. It is ever, "The word of the Lord came unto me." The prophet, then, was a person who stood in a position of exceptional nearness to God, and was the human agent through whom, on special occasions, the Divine will was made known to man. And, from first to last, there is no instance in which the prophetic office may not be thus characterized. All claimed to "speak in the word of the Lord," to one and all "the word of the Lord came," sometimes coupled with predictive utterances, sometimes without them, but their message always rested on a foundation of "Thus saith the Lord." *Leathes.*

The same spirit animates them all ; they are all interpreters and laborers of Jehovah ; they defend, all of them, the faith of God against idolatry, justice and right against tyranny, the

national independence against foreign dominion. In the name of the God of Abraham and of Jacob they labor and succeed in maintaining or in reanimating religious and moral life amid the decay and servitude of Israel. "All the time," says Augustine, "from the epoch when the holy Samuel began to prophesy, to the day when the people of Israel was led captive into Babylonia, is the period of the prophets." Even while calling the people of Israel back to the faith of their fathers, the prophets open to them new perspectives. While reproaching them with the errors that have led to their decay and servitude, they permit them yet to see the future delivery and regeneration. It is their Divine character to live at once in the past and in the future ; to confide alike to the ordinances of the Eternal and to His promises. They move forward, but they change not ; they believe, they hope ; they are faithful to Moses while they announce the Messiah. *Guizot.*

First God, then everything else ; be it man, kingdoms, demons, power, even word as from God, or signs and miracles ! This is the truth which Israel's history had evolved, which Israel's institutions embodied, which Israel's prophecies set forth, and by which, in turn, according to Deuteronomy, Israel's prophecy was to be tested. This then is the meaning of the canon in De. 18 : Try the prophet by his confession of God. And similarly, we read it in the New Testament (1 John 4) : "Try the spirits, whether they are of God. Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God ; and this is the spirit of the Antichrist." And in Old Testament prophecy everything is spiritual, comes from and points to God. Divine revelation meets the moral wants of man, and directs him to God. This one thing appears most clearly throughout the whole Old Testament : that there is absolutely no power in any outward things to produce prophecy, nor yet has the prophet himself any power to produce it within himself by any means of his own, but that in all cases it comes straight from God, to whom, when, how and where He pleases ; that a man becomes a prophet as God gives him the message, and is such only and so long as God continues to send it. On the other hand, God did meet this deep want and longing of His children by sending His prophets and putting His word into their mouths. Hence to receive or else to resist them could not be matter of indifference, since they were the direct ambassadors of God ; but it involved either obedience to Him or else guilt.

The prophet, as preacher, views the present in the light of the future ; as foreteller, the future in the light of the present. He points out present sin, duty, danger or need, but all under the strong light of the Divine future. He speaks of the present in the name of God, and by His direct commission ; of a present, however, which, in the Divine view, is evolving into a future, as the blossom is opening into the fruit. And when he foretells the future, he sees it in the light of the present ; the present lends its colors, scenery, the very historic basis for the picture. This will help to explain alike the substance and the form of the prophetic message. To the prophetic vision the present is ever enlarging, widening, extending. The hills are growing, the valley is spreading, the light is gilding the mountain tops. And presently the hills are clothed with green, the valleys peopled with voices ; the present is merging into the future, although exhibited in the form of the present. The prophet is speaking of Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Assyria ; and these are gradually growing into the shapes of future foes, or future similar relations. And in the midst of such references here and there appears what applied exclusively to that Messianic kingdom which is the goal and final meaning of all, and of all prophecy. It is an entire misunderstanding to regard such prophecies as not applying to the Messianic future, because they occur in the midst of references to contemporary events. As the rapt prophet gazes upon those hills and valleys around him, they seem to grow into gigantic mountains and wide tracts, watered by many a river and peopled with many and strange forms, while here and there the golden light lies on some special height, whence its rays slope down into valleys and glens ; or else the brightness shines out in contrasted glory against dark forest, or shadowy outline in the background. And the prophet could not have spoken otherwise than in the forms of the present. For, had he spoken in language and introduced scenery entirely of the future, not only would his own individuality have been entirely effaced, but he would have been wholly unintelligible to his contemporaries. A. E.

Place and Functions of the Prophets.

The prophets, as God's living witnesses, seem to have stood between the priesthood and the monarchy ; on the one hand, seeking to keep the forms of religion vital with their proper spiritual significance, and, on the other, to secure the administration of the government in

the interests of morality and religion. Of course, prophets would be indispensable in the kingdom of Israel, unless that kingdom was to be immediately abandoned of God as apostate.

Burt.

They were the national poets of Judea. Music and poetry, chants and hymns, were a main part of the studies of the class from which, generally speaking, they were derived. As is natural, we find not only the songs previously specified, but the rest of their compositions, poetical or breathing the spirit of poetry.

They were annalists and historians. A great portion of Isaiah, of Jeremiah, of Daniel, of Jonah, of Haggai, is direct or indirect history.

They were preachers of patriotism, their patriotism being founded on the religious motive. To the subject of the theocracy the enemy of his nation was the enemy of God, the traitor to the public weal was a traitor to his God ; a denunciation of an enemy was a denunciation of a representative of evil, an exhortation in behalf of Jerusalem was an exhortation in behalf of God's kingdom on earth, "the city of our God, the mountain of holiness, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the city of the great King" (Ps. 48 : 1, 2).

They were preachers of morals and of spiritual religion. The symbolical teaching of the law had lost much of its effect. Instead of learning the necessity of purity by the legal washings, the majority came to rest in the outward act as in itself sufficient. It was the work, then, of the prophets to hold up before the eyes of their countrymen a high and pure morality, not veiled in symbols and acts, but such as none could profess to misunderstand.

They were extraordinary, but yet authorized exponents of the law. As an instance of this, we may take Isaiah's description of a true fast (58 : 3-7) ; Ezekiel's explanation of the sins of the fathers being visited on the children (chap. 18) ; Micah's preference of "doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God," to "thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil" (6 : 6-8). In these, as in other similar cases (cf. Hos. 6 : 6 ; Amos 5 : 21), it was the task of the prophets to restore the balance which had been overthrown by the Jews and their teachers dwelling on one side or on the outer covering of a truth or of a duty, and leaving the other side or the inner meaning out of sight.

They were a political power in the State. Strong in the safeguard of their religious character, they were able to serve as a counterpoise

to the royal authority when wielded even by an Ahab.

But the prophets were something more than national poets and annalists, preachers of patriotism, moral teachers, exponents of the law, pastors, and politicians. Their most essential characteristic is, that they were instruments of revealing God's will to man, as in other ways, so specially by predicting future events, and in particular by foretelling the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the redemption effected by Him. P. S.

The Kingdom and its King, Messiah, their Chief Theme.

In the whole history of man we can trace the course of one shaping, overmastering and progressive power before which all others have bowed, and that is the spiritual kingdom of God. *Henry B. Smith.*

If we regard the collective contents of the prophetic books of the Old Testament, we must say that prophecy is employed entirely in promoting the interests of the kingdom of God, and that its main office is to unfold its ways. O.

The whole Old Testament is prophetic. Its special predictions form only a part, although an organic part, of the prophetic Scriptures; and all prophecy points to the kingdom of God, and to the Messiah as its King. The narrow boundaries of Judah and Israel were to be enlarged so as to embrace all men, and one King would reign in righteousness over a ransomed world that would offer to Him its homage of praise and service. All that had marred the moral harmony of earth would be removed; the universal Fatherhood of God would become the birthright of redeemed, pardoned, regenerated humanity; and all this blessing would centre in and flow from the Person of the Messiah. Such is the promise of the Old Testament which the New Testament declares to have been fulfilled in Christ Jesus. And this Messianic idea is the moving spring of the Old Testament. It is also its sole *raison d'être*, viewed as a revelation. Otherwise the Jewish people and their history could only have an archæological or a political interest for us. Hebrewism, if it had any Divine meaning, was the religion of the future, and Israel embodied for the world the religious idea which, in its universal application, is the kingdom of God. . . . Thus the Old Testament pointed beyond itself to the perfectness which it announced and for which it prepared. That perfectness consists in the removal of all the evil which sin

has wrought, in the restoration of man to God, and in the fulness of blessings which flows from fellowship between God and man. This is the kingdom of God. To announce it and to prepare for it was the object of the Old Testament.

It is in the light of the wider view of fulfilled prophecy which, as a whole and in all its parts, refers to the kingdom of God upon earth, that we must study individual predictions. They pass far beyond anything actual at the time of their utterance to the underlying ideal. They are not exaggerated Orientalisms for simple facts, but there was one grand moving idea set forth with ever unfolding clearness: the hope of a great Fatherhood of God, of a great brotherhood of man, in which the grand connecting link, alike with God and man, should be the One who embodied all that was ideally possible in man, and who manifested all that could be manifested of God; who united the highest point in the human with the utmost condescension of the Divine—God and man; who brought God's reconciliation to man, and by it reconciled man to God, combining in Himself these two—the suffering of man and the conquering of God, and organically united them in conquering by suffering; One who, by so doing, made possible and introduced the Messianic kingdom of God, through the willing submission of man. Thus the God-Man fully realized the theanthropic idea of the whole Old Testament. As each event in His history kindled into light, it shone upon the individual prophecies, and made them bright. A. E.

Prophecy is systematic, progressive, and all-inclusive. The theory of a revelation of redemption accounts for these features. Christ is then the centre, and hence all is connected in Him; and at the same time the Messianic part of revelation is largest, most important, most like the heart in the economy of the whole. This accounts also for the progress in all directions and toward all issues, but all conditioned by the approach of Christ, and by the fulness of the disclosure as to His person and work and its consequences. And this accounts for the all-inclusive character of the predictions. The Gentile future must stand in the light of the Jewish past, and be indebted to it. The Jewish unbelief must serve as a foil to the Gentile faith, and be at length reconciled to it and one with it. The world's kingdoms must go through their crises of trial and judgment, to prepare the world as a whole for the Heavenly King. Thus, with prophecy, there is a Redeemer, and with Him a philosophy of history

leading upward ; without prophecy, no redemption, but law and sin fastened down by it. *Cairns.*

The Hebrew prophets enunciate those great moral and even political axioms, which are permanent prophecies because they are at the same time eternal truths, predictions which in containing the grounds of fulfilment involve the principle of foresight, and teach the science of the future in its perpetual elements. *Coleridge.*

There are prophecies which unfold great prospects and results in respect to the manifestation of God's purposes of grace and truth toward men. Such prophecies were of necessity general and comprehensive in their terms, and admitted of manifold fulfilments. It is of them that we would understand the singularly pregnant and beautiful remark of Lord Bacon that "Divine prophecies, being of the nature of their author, with whom a thousand years are as but one day, are therefore not fulfilled punctually at once, but have springing and germinant accomplishment ; though the height or fulness of them may refer to some one age." The very first prophecy ever uttered to fallen man—the promise given of a seed through the woman which should bruise the head of the serpent—and that afterward given to Abraham of a seed of blessing, may be fitly specified as illustrations of the principle ; since in either case—though by virtue, not of a double sense, but of a wide and comprehensive import—a fulfilment from the first was constantly proceeding, while "the height and fulness" of the predicted good could only be reached in the redemption of Christ and the glories of His kingdom. *P. Fairbairn.*

It was one of the special functions of those ancient prophets to minister to the faith and hope of the few yet found faithful among the many faithless. To them, and primarily for their sake, God spake, through His servants, of the great things then in the future of His Zion. The Messiah yet to come ; the work He should achieve while yet among men in the flesh ; the mission of the Holy Spirit ; the conversion of the Gentiles ; the fortunes of the Jews—at first mostly cast off for their unbelief, but ultimately brought in through great mercy ; the abrogation of the sacrificial system ; the outgoing of the gospel to the distant nations of the earth ; the mission of truth and its triumphs in every land, and the final victory of Christ over all opposing powers—these things are grouped to-

gether into these glorious visions of the then distant future—a grand and sublime panorama of the Christian age in whole, making revelations even to us who live midway in their fulfilment, such as no lover of his race and lover of Christ can contemplate without being quickened anew in faith and love for the prayer and the work to which Christ calls him. How earnestly do these prophecies invite the most careful study ! We do not wonder that Peter should endorse and commend them to his Christian brethren, saying : "We have also the word of prophecy made more sure" (*i.e.*, by its incipient fulfilment), "whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as to a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts" (2 Pet. 1 : 19). *H. C.*

How plain the Hebrew prophets talk to us, how easily we understand their essential message, when taken out of its partial aspects of time and place ! We know well the chronological periods of their predictions ; we are not at all ignorant of their primary applications, nor of the peculiar, the very peculiar historical states that furnish the ground of their impassioned admonitions ; most special indeed, most exclusive are they in their national and ethical aspects ; and yet we cannot help feeling that these ancient seers are talking to us, talking to all men, to all ages. Their words are just the words, just the figures, which are needed now, and found to be most appropriate now, in rebuking every form of wrong, of oppression, of public or private wickedness. *T. Lewis.*

They are most profitable for holiness, both personal, ecclesiastical and national. They reveal God in all His fulness and variety of being ; they speak in human ears the strains of heaven. Oh, how very sublime, how very pathetic, how very moral, how very Divine they are ! It is the richest tissue of discourse that was ever woven. The poet, the orator, the merchant, the statesman, the divine, every form of spiritual workman, will find the instruments, and the measures, and the rules, and the chief performances of his art, therein. How many-sided are the prophets ! How they stretch athwart the middle space between heaven and earth, lying all abroad in the most varied beauty ! *E. Irving.*

The sixteen prophets may be divided into four groups : the prophets of the northern kingdom—Hosea, Amos, Jonah ; the prophets of the southern kingdom—Joel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Obadiah. Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk,

Zephaniah; the prophets of the Captivity—Ezekiel and Daniel; the prophets of the Return—Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

They may be arranged in the following chronological order—namely, Joel, Jonah, Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Ha-

bakkuk, Obadiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. But it will be more convenient to take them in the order in which they stand in the Old Testament, speaking first of the four great prophets, and then of the twelve minor prophets. P. S.

THE PROPHET ISAIAH.

THE prophet Isaiah is by general consent the greatest of all Hebrew writers, and the foremost of the long list of seers who form so remarkable an element in the history of the Jewish race. And yet we know but little of his personal history. His writings are his great memorial, and these so fully describe the person and offices of the Messiah, that from the time of Jerome downward he has been known as the Evangelical Prophet. R. P. S.

Jerome, in his introduction to the prophecies of Isaiah, says, "He is to be regarded not so much as a prophet as an evangelist. For he revealed all the mysteries of Christ and of the Church so plainly, that you would not think that he was prophesying concerning future events, but rather relating the history of the past." Other fathers in the Latin Church have bestowed upon him the same and similar appellations; especially does Augustine love to emphasize the Gospel truths of the great prophet. Nor did the fathers of the Greek Church fail to recognize this prominent feature in Isaiah's writings, as the words of Cyril, Theodoret, and others sufficiently testify. The reformers, too, re-echo these sentiments. Luther says, "He is full of loving, comforting, cheering words for all poor consciences and wretched, afflicted souls," and thus virtually repeats what the Jewish commentator Abarbanel had said centuries before him, "The whole Book of Isaiah is full of consolation." Vitringa, to the present day yet the master commentator of Isaiah, in his edition of 1714 quotes with strong terms of approbation the words of Jerome; while the commentators of the present day, both conservative or liberal, can only approve the sentiment of their predecessors as to the evangelical contents of Isaiah. The voice of the Church in this regard is but the echo of Christ and His disciples, as is apparent from almost every book in the New Testament. No writer of the Old Testament

is so frequently quoted in the New as the son of Amoz. Paul's Epistle to the Romans is almost built on the great prophet. Sebastian Munster, in his commentary of 1660, declares that the "testimonies of Isaiah ornament as would stars and jewels the most pregnant letter of Paul to the Romans."

Isaiah, more than any of his prophetic brethren, spiritualized and denationalized all the prominent ideas with which prophecy is accustomed to deal. The central idea of both Testaments, and the connecting link between them, is the idea of the kingdom of God. The revelations of both covenants are Christo-centric only because the establishment of this kingdom is possible through Christ Jesus alone. Isaiah's sermons, like those of all the other prophets, deal with this cardinal doctrine, but in a peculiar manner. What distinguishes him from them and brings him so near to the evangelists of the New Testament is the fact that he more than others points to the coming Messiah as the chosen servant of Jehovah to accomplish the end of which the others had spoken. With the vividness of an eye-witness he describes the manner in which this Messiah will fulfil His mission, and the personal characteristics and attributes that enable Him, and Him alone, to accomplish this. In other words, a New Testament and evangelical atmosphere pervades the preaching of Isaiah, because he goes beyond the other seers of the Old Testament, and does not, like them, restrict himself to the simple announcement of the new dispensation, but, with a clear and clarion voice of a messenger bringing the most glorious news, describes more definitely than all his predecessors the person and the work of the chosen medium. He takes one vast stride beyond his prophetic brethren, looks more deeply than they into the mysterious plans of the Godhead, and has been enlightened beyond their knowledge. Where in all pre-Christian revelation could we find a

clearer elucidation of the work of redemption than in the redemption of the servant of Jehovah (Isa. 40-66), especially in that most glorious fifty-third chapter, the climax and corner-stone of the whole Old Testament? The sufferings and vicarious death of the innocent servant, the deliverance of the captives from sin and its consequences, and the redemption of all mankind through Him who bears away all our sins, and in whose stripes all are healed, have the vividness of historical narrative.

In this manner Isaiah, about seven centuries before Christ, proclaims the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. The prophet becomes an apostle; the lines of time are erased; the centuries still to come are overleaped, and the work yet to be accomplished described as though it were already done. Truly the pious fathers of the Church did not go astray when they called this chief among the prophets "the Evangelist of the Old Testament." No book of the Old Testament is so replete with Gospel truth as that of the son of Amoz. Prophecy reached in him its highest development, and he stands unrivalled as the first among his peers among God's preachers in the old covenant.

Schoedde.

Isaiah is by far the greatest of the writing prophets. We cannot open his book anywhere but we meet with the grasp of a great spirit. There is a rush of eloquence that carries you away; there is a splendor of diction and conception like that of a seraph; and whereas in other prophets perhaps a single idea stands out with lonely grandeur, here you have a perfect Alpine range of great truths, rising peak behind peak, up into the very heavens. Yet it is not difficult, I think, to see which is the greatest idea in the whole Book of Isaiah. It is the idea of God. That might, indeed, be said to be the leading idea in all the prophets, because what made them prophets was the vividness of their conception of God. Undoubtedly; yet none of the others come nearly up in this respect to Isaiah. It was given to him to speak about God as God never was spoken of by mortal lips until the Son came forth to reveal the Father. *Stalker.*

Whatever there is of poetry in the roll of the prophets, whatever of truth, of purity, and of elevation as to moral principle and theistic doctrine, and especially whatever there is of catholicity and of hopefulness for all nations, is pre-eminently found in the prophecies of Isaiah. These prophecies may well be said to embrace and to comprehend, and, in a sense, at once to recapitulate the revelations of all preceding ages,

and to foreshow the revelations that were yet to come. The moral law is there in the fixedness of its eternal axioms; the spiritual life is there, and the substance of the Gospel is there; for the Redeemer of the world and the most signal of all events in the world's history are there; and with the Saviour the brightness of the latest ages of the human family sheds a light upon this prophecy. Revelation culminates in the pages of this prophet; for the Old and the New Covenants are therein represented.

I. T.

Guided by the Spirit, he took in and pondered the leading particulars of Christ's person, history, and work. He was enabled to contemplate Him as a child born, as a son given, as a rod out of the stem of Jesse, as a branch growing out of his roots, and also as Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. He speaks of His teaching and of His miracles—of His life and of His death; fully and with wonderful exactitude does he portray His sufferings, and with unmistakable distinctness declare their sacrificial nature. He proclaims Messiah as Prophet, Priest, and King, and especially amplifies, under a variety of the most beautiful images, the glory and blessedness of His reign. And as his eye sweeps over this range of evangelical truth—as he seems as if reading beforehand the pages of the New Testament, we wonder not at his clear recognition of a future life, of the living again of the dead, of the dwellers in the dust awakening to sing, of a freshness of life covering them like the dew of herbs. The knowledge of a resurrection and a blessed immortality seems inseparably related to the knowledge of a Saviour, without whom there could be no resurrection, and future existence could not be life, but everlasting death. And therefore we see how to the man before whom there was lifted up the veil of futurity, to behold the Messiah so distinctly, there was also lifted up the veil for the beholding of immortality. *Stoughton.*

The style of Isaiah has been universally admired as the most perfect model of the sublime; it is distinguished for all the magnificence and for all the sweetness of the Hebrew language. The variety of his images and the animated warmth of his expressions characterize him as unequalled in point of eloquence; and if we were desirous of producing a specimen of the dignity and beauties of the Scripture language, we should have recourse to Isaiah. Jerome speaks of him as conversant with every part of science, and indeed the marks of a cul-

tivated and improved mind are stamped in every page of his book ; but these are almost eclipsed by the splendor of his inspired knowledge. In the delivery of his prophecies and instructions he utters his enraptured strains with an elevation and majesty which unhalloved lips could never have attained. From the grand exordium in the first chapter to the concluding description of the Gospel, to "be brought forth" in wonders and to terminate in the dispensation of eternity ; from first to last there is one continued display of inspired wisdom, revealing its oracles and precepts for the instruction of mankind. *Gray.*—His style is always in perfect harmony with the objects he describes ; and as the subjects vary, so his style varies also. If he makes a recital, it is with a natural simplicity, in which the skill of the writer is felt but not seen. When he exhorts or rebukes, his invectives are piercing and his aspect is terrible. When he casts his prophetic glance forward to happier times, his genius seems to struggle with his subject for the invention of images more beautiful and comparisons more just. But his chief merit, and that which gives him a marked pre-eminence over the poets of the East, is the admirable precision of his expressions, the richness of his imagery, and the perfect contour of his periods. *Eichhorn.*

In Isaiah we see prophetic authorship reaching its culminating point. Everything conspired to raise him to an elevation to which no prophet, either before or after, could as a writer attain. Among the other prophets, each of the more important ones is distinguished by some one particular excellence and some one peculiar talent. In Isaiah all kinds of talent and all beauties of prophetic discourse meet together so as mutually to temper and qualify each other. It is not so much any single feature that distinguishes him as the symmetry and perfection of the whole. . . . Both as prophet and as author Isaiah stands upon that calm, sunny height which in each several branch of ancient literature one eminently favored spirit at the right time takes possession of, which seems, as it were, to have been waiting for him, and which, when he has come and mounted the ascent, seems to keep and guard him to the last as its own right man. In the sentiments which he expresses, in the topics of his discourses, and in the manner of expression, Isaiah uniformly reveals himself as the kingly prophet. *Ewald.*—Isaiah stands pre-eminent above all other prophets, as well in the contents and spirit of his predictions as in their form and style.

Simplicity, clearness, sublimity and freshness are the never-failing characteristics of his prophecies. The spiritual riches of the prophet are seen in his style, which always befits his subject. When he rebukes and threatens, it is like a storm, and when he comforts, his language is as tender and mild as (to use his own words) that of a mother comforting her son. *Hengstenberg.*

For sixty years this noble and heroic man, who after David fills the foremost place in the story of the chosen people, discharged the varied offices of prophet and seer, writer and statesman, in a most critical and eventful period of his nation's history. To his devoted loyalty to the God who loved Israel, to his unswerving faith, to his splendid patriotism was owing the great moral revolution which was rewarded by the golden reign of the great Hezekiah, and the strange spectacle of the comparatively little kingdom of Judah successfully defying the mighty power of the greatest nation of the Eastern world. And although Isaiah survived the good and great Hezekiah, and lived long enough to witness the relapse of the court and people into their old sin and degradation, his writings and his work lived on long after Jerusalem was a byword and her temple a ruin. Though, to human eyes, Isaiah and his work seemed a failure, and his words as though only traced in the sand, the words and the work, the one dictated and the other inspired by the Eternal of Hosts, men now see possess a deathless power which increases as the centuries roll on in their solemn course. The words have been—nay, still are—in part, at least, the basis of the theology of Christendom. On them the pious Jew still loves to linger, because they represent to him the noblest, truest aspirations of his race. In them, century after century, devout Christians in every nation under heaven find written in the sublimest yet in the simplest language those sweet and blessed promises which, in all the stress and fever of life's trials, nerve men and women to suffer and be strong, and which again and again whisper to them of the coming times when sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Like so many of earth's great ones, the prophet-statesman—so runs the sad tradition—passed through pain and agony to his rest. Now in the bosom of God he sees the fruit of his long and noble thought, as far as earth was concerned, ill-requited toils—sees the souls of unnumbered harassed ones finding in his story of Messiah new and ever new bulwarks for the

faith which must save them; reading in his sweet and comfortable promises great and fresh assurances of the perfect peace which passeth understanding. May we not say of Isaiah as of Isaiah's Master, "He sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied"? *Spence.*

From first to last Isaiah's character stands before us as one of almost superhuman elevation. When we think of him during those sixty years discharging so many varied offices—prophet, apostle, psalmist, instructor, intercessor, evangelist, apocalyptic seer; expostulating, reproving, expounding, comforting; doing all with deepest self-resignation and unfaltering faith toward God, and with serene dignity toward men, we seem to be contemplating one who, while retaining all human sympathies, has had a portion of seraphic nature communicated to him; one who was fitted to bear witness to the perfect "servant of the Lord" in prophecy, but even, in some degree, to foreshadow His character in actual life. *W. Kay.*

Isaiah was not only a prophet, but also a prophet-historian—a prominent instance, under the general law, that the prophets, as a class, wrote out the historic annals of their respective times. He wrote "the acts of Uzziah" (2 Chron. 26 : 22) and of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 32 : 32). The close resemblance between the two extant histories of the great Assyrian invasion—the first in 2 K. 18 : 13 to the end of chap. 20, and the second in Isaiah, chaps. 36–39—leaves scarcely a doubt that Isaiah wrote the former as well as the latter, and if so, then also, generally, the annals of his time. *H. C.*

Unity of Authorship of the Book.

This book not only forms a part of the Old Testament canon as far as we can trace it back, but has held its place there without any change of form, size or contents, of which the least external evidence can be adduced. The allusions to this prophet, and the imitations of him in the later books of the Old Testament, are not confined to any one part of the book or any single class of passages. The apocryphal writers who make mention of it use no expressions which imply that it was not already long complete in its present form and size. The same thing seems to be implied in the numerous citations of this book in the New Testament. Without going here into minute details, a correct idea of the general fact may be conveyed by simply stating that of the

sixty-six chapters of Isaiah, as divided in our modern Bibles, forty-seven are commonly supposed to be directly quoted or distinctly alluded to, and some of them repeatedly. The same thing may be illustrated clearly on a smaller scale by stating that in the twenty-one cases where Isaiah is expressly named in the New Testament, the quotations are drawn from the first, sixth, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twenty-ninth, fortieth, forty second, fifty-third, sixty-first, and sixty-fifth chapters of the book before us. These facts, together with the absence of all countervailing evidence, show clearly that the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (Luke 4 : 17), known and quoted by our Lord and His apostles, was, as a whole, identical with that which we have under the same name. We find accordingly a long, unbroken series of interpreters, Jewish and Christian, through a course of ages not only acquiescing in this general statement, but regarding all the passages and parts of which the book consists as clearly and unquestionably genuine. *A.*

The lifetime of Isaiah is the first key to the true arrangement of his prophecies. During its course the Assyrian power rose to its height, scourged and wasted the nations, led Ephraim captive, afflicted Judah, dashed itself against the rock of God's promise to Zion and the house of David, and then began to decay, its chief mission being fulfilled. The prophet lived through the gathering of this thunder-cloud. He saw it burst over his country, was chosen to announce the fall of the destroyer, and survived till after the peaceful close of Hezekiah's reign. Thus his prophecies fall naturally into two main divisions, contrasted in their character and tone, Assyrian and post-Assyrian. To make this contrast plainer, and show the historical basis on which it rests, four chapters of direct history are interposed between them (36–39), which recount the Assyrian overthrow, the reprieve of the kingdom, and the Babylonian embassy. The Assyrian prophecies all converge on the great crisis of Sennacherib's overthrow. The post-Assyrian diverge from the brief warning of Judah's exile, occasioned by the message of Merodach, when all the royal treasures and the royal seed of David would be carried away to Babylon (39 : 6, 7).

Again, Isaiah's ministry before Sennacherib's fall includes three periods, marked by diverse characters. Twenty years—from the last of Uzziah to the third of Ahaz—saw the gradual advance of the Assyrian, through the reign of Pekah, till a first crisis, when Pekah was slain by Hoshea and Rezin by Tiglath-pileser, and

Damascus was sacked and almost ruined. To this corresponds a first series of visions (chaps. 1-12). Its main features are a stern warning to Israel and Judah of troubles at hand from the Assyrian, mingled with prophecies of Immanuel, the Prince of Peace, the Rod from the stem of Jesse, in whom the Gentiles were to trust and Zion was to rejoice forever.

A second period of sixteen years reaches from the fourth year of Ahaz to the fourth of Hezekiah, when the siege of Samaria began. During its course Ephraim barely survived, and Judah was brought very low through the sin of Ahaz. The Assyrian went on confirming and extending his dominion in all the border lands, but had not resumed any direct aggression on the land of Israel. The Burdens on the Nations, a second series of visions, belong to this period, with a sequel in which warnings of judgment are followed by new messages of grace (chaps. 13-27). This series closes, like the first, with a full promise of the gathering of Israel (chaps. 11 : 11-16 ; 27 : 12, 13).

The third period reaches from the siege of Samaria to the overthrow of the Assyrian host. It is marked by the fall of Israel and the sore distress of Judah, followed by the speedy destruction of the Assyrian army. The visions

begin with four woes on Israel and Judah, mingled with promises of a signal deliverance. They continue with a woe on the Assyrian spoiler, a message of judgment to all the nations, and a glorious prophecy of the good things to come (chaps. 28-35).

The later, or post-Assyrian prophecies, belong to the peaceful close of Hezekiah's reign. Hence their order and succession is fixed by no historical changes, but by the nature of that future to which the predictions belong. The prophet, whose lips had so early been touched with heavenly fire, attains in his old age to a peaceful and lofty elevation, like that of Moses on Pisgah, whence his eye ranges far a wide over the landscape of ages to come (40-66). *Birks.*

[For a detailed examination of the disruptive theories of the earlier Continental critics bearing upon the first thirty-five chapters of Isaiah see the Introduction to Volume of Dr. J. Addison Alexander, on the "Earlier Prophecies," pages 25-68.

The main question, touching the unity of authorship of the earlier and later prophecies, is treated more fully in the special introduction to chaps. 40-66, to which the reader's attention is called. B.]

ISAIAH, CHAPTER I.

1 : 1 THE vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the LORD hath spoken : I have nourished
3 and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner,
4 and the ass his master's crib : *but* Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah
sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly :
5 they have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged
6 *and gone* backward. Why will ye be still stricken, that ye revolt more and more ? the whole
7 head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there
is no soundness in it ; *but* wounds, and bruises, and festering sores : they have not been
8 closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil. Your country is desolate ; your cities
are burned with fire ; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as
9 overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a
lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the LORD of hosts had left unto
us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been like unto
Gomorrah.
10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom ; give ear unto the law of our God, ye
11 people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me ? saith
the LORD : I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts ; and I delight
12 not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before
13 me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts ? Bring no more vain obla-

tions ; incense is an abomination unto me ; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies,—
 14 I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed
 15 feasts my soul hateth : they are a trouble unto me ; I am weary to bear them. And when ye
 spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you : yea, when ye make many prayers,
 16 I will not hear : your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean ; put away the
 7 evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil : learn to do well ; seek judge-
 ment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

8 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD : though your sins be as scarlet,
 19 they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye
 20 be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land : but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall
 be devoured with the sword : for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

21 How is the faithful city become an harlot ! she that was full of judgement ! righteousness
 22 lodged in her, but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water.
 23 Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves ; every one loveth gifts, and followeth
 a reward : they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto

24 Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me
 25 of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies : and I will turn my hand upon thee,
 26 and thoroughly purge away thy dross, and will take away all thy tin : and I will restore thy
 judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning : afterward thou shalt be called
 7 The city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgement, and
 28 her converts with righteousness. But the destruction of the transgressors and the sinners
 29 shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed. For they shall be
 ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that
 30 ye have chosen. For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no
 31 water. And the strong shall be as tow, and his work as a spark ; and they shall both burn
 together, and none shall quench them.

First Series of Visions, Chaps. 1-12.

THE twelve chapters, though composed of
 different portions (chaps. 2-6), in the reign of
 Ahaz, and of a later (chaps. 1, 7-12), in the
 reign of Ahaz, still form one connected whole,
 distinct in character from the burdens and woes
 that follow. They fall naturally into a seven-
 fold division : 1. The Preface or General In-
 troduction (1:2-31) ; 2. The Earliest Prophe-
 cy (chaps. 2-4) ; 3. The Parable of the Vine-
 yard (chap. 5) ; 4. The Prophet's Call (chap. 6) ;
 5. The Prophecy of Immanuel (chaps. 7-9 : 7) ;
 6. The Warning of Assyrian Conquests (chap.
 9 : 8 to chap. 10) ; 7. The Times of Messiah
 (chaps. 11, 12). Of these the second, third and
 fourth will belong to the last year of Uzziah ;
 and the rest will be considerably later, in the
 second and third years of Ahaz. *Birks.*

Chap. 1. It is neither easy nor specially im-
 portant to decide whether this chapter was
 written first in the order of time. Opinions are
 divided between this and the sixth. The latter
 refers either to the induction of Isaiah into the
 prophetic office, or to his reconsecration to it as
 a special anointing that he might be the better
 qualified to go to an obdurate people. Very
 probably this chapter may have been simply
 suggested by great judgments in the time of

Ahaz, following in consequence of previous
 great sins, and may then have been written as
 an introduction to the book. For it has the ap-
 pearance of a general epitome of his prophetic
 messages—a brief summary view of the main
 points which they embrace. Here are the great
 sins of the people ; the Lord's call to them to
 repent, coupled with His promise to them of
 free pardon ; the calamities sent upon them,
 either in chastisement to reclaim, or (this fail-
 ing) in righteous retribution to destroy. These
 are the points made in this chapter. They are
 also the points made in general throughout the
 book. Hence this may be taken as a summary
 or chapter of contents, introductory in the sense
 of being a brief presentation of the subject-
 matter of the whole. This view of the chapter
 is now adopted by some of the best critics.
 Dr. Alexander says : " It is probable that this
 chapter exhibits a sequence of events or provi-
 dential scheme which might be realized in more
 than one emergency ; not so much a prediction
 as a prophetic lesson with respect to the effects
 which certain causes must infallibly produce.
 Such a discourse would be peculiarly appropri-
 ate as an introduction to the prophecies which
 follow." This view, if accepted, practically
 disposes of our preliminary question of date,
 the chapter being written for an introduction,

and yet not written first in order of time, but suggested by events in the reign of Ahaz, or possibly yet later. H. C.

The design of this chapter is to show the connection between the sins and sufferings of God's people and the necessity of further judgments as means of purification and deliverance. The popular corruption is first exhibited as the effect of alienation from God, and as the cause of national calamities (verses 2-9). It is then exhibited as coexisting with punctilious exactness in religious duties, and as rendering them worthless (verses 10-20). It is finally exhibited in twofold contrast, first with a former state of things and then with one still future, to be brought about by the destruction of the wicked, and especially of wicked rulers (verses 21-31).

The first part of the chapter describes the sin and then the suffering of the people. The former is characterized as filial ingratitude, stupid inconsideration, habitual transgression, contempt of God, and alienation from Him (verses 2-4). The suffering is first represented by the figure of disease and wounds, and then in literal terms as the effect of an invasion, by which the nation was left desolate, and only saved by God's regard for His elect from the total destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (verses 5-9). The second part is connected with the first by the double allusion to Sodom and Gomorrah with which one closes and the other opens. In this part the prophet shows the utter inefficacy of religious rites to counteract the natural effect of their iniquities, and then exhorts them to the use of the true remedy. Under the former head, addressing them as similar in character to Sodom and Gomorrah, he describes their sacrifices as abundant and exact, but not acceptable; their attendance at the Temple as punctual, and yet insulting; their bloodless offerings as abhorrent, and their holy days as wearisome and hateful on account of their iniquities; their very prayers as useless, because their hands were stained with blood (verses 10-15). As a necessary means of restoration to God's favor, he exhorts them to forsake their evil courses and to exercise benevolence and justice, assuring them that God was willing to forgive them and restore the advantages which they had forfeited by sin, but at the same time resolved to punish the impenitent transgressor (verses 16-20). The transition from the second to the third part is abrupt, and introduced by a pathetic exclamation. In this part the prophet compares Israel as it is with what it has been and with what it shall be. In the former comparison, he employs two metaphors, each fol-

lowed by a literal explanation of its meaning; that of a faithful wife become a harlot, and that of adulterated wine and silver, both expressive of a moral deterioration, with special reference to magistrates and rulers (verses 21-23). In the other comparison, the coming judgments are presented in the twofold aspect of purification and deliverance to the Church, and of destruction to its wicked members. The prophet sees the leading men of Israel destroyed, first as oppressors, to make room for righteous rulers and thus save the state; then as idolaters consumed by that in which they trusted for protection. A.

1. The first verse is plainly a common title of the whole book. This title implies the Divine authority of the whole book. It answers to the promise (Num. 12:6), "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision." It implies, further, the unity of the whole work. These are no fragments, thrown fortuitously together. They form a gospel of the Old Testament, midway in time between Moses and Christ, between the first passover of the Exodus and the finished and all-perfect sacrifice of the Son of God.

2, 3. The message of the prophet begins with an echo to the sublime appeal in the song of Moses, the parting voice of the law—"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth" (De. 32:1). The subject of each appeal is the same. Moses predicts the perverseness and rebellion of Israel. Isaiah, the foremost of the prophets, opens his message by proclaiming that the warning given seven hundred years before by Moses is now fulfilled. The same witnesses, summoned before to give solemnity to the warning, must now attest its fulfilment. All angels above, and all men below, and all the visible works of God are to give ear with reverence, while Jehovah, the Lord of heaven and earth, pleads with His rebellious people. When the Creator speaks, all creatures are bound to give ear. *Birks.*

The Bible constantly and unfalteringly appeals to the analogy of the deepest and most familiar emotions of our own nature. It does not scruple to resort to the most naked anthropathic images and expressions; either secure, according to the saying of Coleridge, that it could not be misconstrued amid such clear and copious assertions of the Divine spirituality, or else as careless, even though it were in some degree misunderstood, if it could but win us from our fears and our distrust. It is impossi-

ble to imagine anything more intensely pathetic than the daring imagery by which the prophets offer represent God as chiding, upbraiding, threatening, and anon reluctantly beseeching His perverse and ungrateful creatures. (See also Jer. 31:18-21; 32:36-40; Ezek. 16:3; Hos. 6:4; 7:13-16; 11:7, 8; 13:4-10, and a host of other passages.) *Henry Rogers.*

2. The relation in which the Lord delights to exhibit Himself to His people is that of a father to his children; and when they are disobedient and rebellious, He impresses upon us the enormity of their conduct, by reminding us of the sternest of life's sorrows—a father's grief at the unworthiness of his son. "I have nourished and brought up children," He says, "and they have rebelled against Me." He had not only nourished them—that is, nursed their infant and helpless years—but had watched over and sustained their growth—had "brought them up" to the strength and glory of manhood, and then—they rebelled against Him. There is a deep pathos in the suggestion here presented to the mind, of the solemn grief of a father over a rebellious and worthless son, on the one hand; and of the intensity of the son's ingratitude in rebelling against the paternal hand, on the other. *Kitto.*—Essentially this very sin of cold ingratitude and rebellion against God's authority, charged here upon Israel, lies at the door of all ungodly, unrepenting sinners in every age and in every land, with only the difference of greater guilt in the case of the more enlightened. For, who of us all hath not been nourished and brought up as a child by our great Father above? Whose life has not been crowned by His lovingkindness and tender mercies? *H. C.*

The highest and most natural conception of the universe is that which makes God the Father of His rational and spiritual creatures, which constitutes them a family, and which implies communication between Him and them as personal beings, He making known His will and character, and they obeying and adoring Him. If we believe that God made man with a rational and a religious nature—a child—capable of communion with Him, and of finding in Him only the highest source of happiness and means of moral perfection, then it would be exceedingly strange if God should not reveal Himself to him. Shall not a father speak to his own child? It is demonstrable, on the principles of reason, that if man had continued in a state of innocence, the highest progress and expansion and felicity of his nature could not have been attained except by com-

munion with God. Man becomes assimilated to that with which he voluntarily holds communion. And since God is the fountain of all excellence, why should He not communicate Himself to an innocent creature whom He had made with faculties to know and love and enjoy Him? *M. Hopkins.*

What God desires by our training here is, that we become like to Him; that there be nurtured in us a power to discern between good and evil; that, by giving our own voluntary consent to His appointments, and that by discovering in various and perplexing circumstances what is the right thing to do, we may have our own moral natures as enlightened, strengthened and fully developed every way as possible. The object of God in declaring His will to us is not to point out particular steps, but to bring our wills into conformity with His, so that whether we err in any particular step or no, we shall still be near to Him in intention. He does with us as we with children. We do not always at once relieve them from their little difficulties, but watch with interest the working of their own conscience regarding the matter, and will give them no sign till they themselves have decided. *Dods.*

3. No sooner had we got within the walls of Tiberias, than the drove began to disperse. Every ox knew perfectly well his owner, his house, and the way to it, nor did he get bewildered for a moment in the mazes of these narrow and crooked alleys. As for the asses, they walked straight to the door, and up to their master's "crib." I followed one company clear into their habitation, and saw each take his appropriate manger, and begin his evening meal of dry *tibn*. Isaiah says in all this they were wiser than their owners, who neither knew nor considered, but forsook the Lord, and provoked the Holy One of Israel. *Thomson.*

Like the ox and the ass, Israel had a master, upon whom he was dependent, and to whom he owed obedience; but, unlike them, he did not recognize and would not serve his rightful sovereign and the author of his mercies. A.—The chosen people have become brutish, and debased themselves below the beasts of the field. Mere animal instinct is a safer guide than reason, perverted by pride and sensual vice. Contempt for God renders men more senseless than brutes themselves. *Birks.*

Narrow the prospects of man to this time-world, and it is impossible to escape the conclusions of the epicurean sensualist. If to-morrow we die, let us eat and drink to-day. If we die the sinner's death, it becomes a matter

of mere taste whether we shall live the sinner's life or not. But if our existence is forever, then plainly that which is to be daily subdued and subordinated is the animal within us; that which is to be cherished is that which is likeliest God within us—which we have from Him, and which is the sole pledge of eternal being in the spirit-life. F. W. R.

Doth not consider. The want of thought about sin is one of the most radical hindrances to conversion, as it is one of the gravest causes of defective, barren piety. Out of this want of intelligent thoughtfulness grows the imperfect estimate and superficial feeling respecting the intrinsic nature and heinousness of sin which are found so largely in the world and in the Church. B.

4. They are gone backward. Every step away from the Lord is really a step backward. It is like turning one's face away from the sun, and walking toward darkness. There are two standards of life—this world's and Christ's; we may be making progress according to the former, and at the same time going backward according to the latter. Away from God is always downward, no matter if we be climbing among men. Getting nearer to God in heart, in life, is always getting onward; though in the world's scale we may be descending. We need, therefore, to watch our hearts and our spiritual life when we are prospering in earthly ways. We need to beware lest, while we are going forward enthusiastically in men's eyes, we may be going backward as God and angels see us. S. S. T.

5, 6. The Divine medicines appear only to aggravate the disease. It is no spot on the surface, but a deep-seated infection, poisoning the springs of life. Their afflictions have been followed by deeper sin. "In the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord—this king Ahaz" (2 Chron. 28:22). As it was with their king, so with the people. The furnace, in which wax and silver are melted or refined, only hardens clay. *Birks.*

6. Sin is deep in all the soul. The mind is enmity against God, so unsound that it is not subject to God's law, neither indeed can be; and it is an affecting thought, that from the hour when he was born the unconverted sinner has hardly ever felt one right emotion Godward. There has never been one breath of free and cordial and filial devotion, never the pulse of spontaneous, unforced loyalty, never one hour of simple, genuine piety. The whole head is sick, the whole heart faint, and instead of tending toward self-cure, each day makes the earth-

liness more intense, the carnality more complete. *Hamilton.*

The Lord takes none up but the forsaken, makes none healthy but the sick, gives sight to none but blind, brings none to life but the dead, sanctifies none but sinners and bestows wisdom upon none but the foolish. *Luther.*

9. A faithful remnant still survived. The covenant of God could not fail, and a holy seed was kept alive in the land. But it was small and feeble, and the general corruption rivalled the cities of the plain. *Birks.*

11-20. The prophets everywhere recognize and insist upon the distinction between the outward forms of the Old Testament and their inward spiritual meaning. Isaiah declares that it is not sacrifices and burnt offerings, oblations and incense, treading God's courts, new moons and Sabbaths, feasts and assemblies, that God requires, but purity of heart and life, and obedience to His will. W. H. G.—Prophetism, while confirming the historical reality of all the institutions of the law, presented their spiritual bearing, without which it declared the observance of the letter to be not only meaningless, but an absolute perversion of their Divine purpose. Sacrifices were meaningless without brokenness of heart. Festivals and fasts and all rites were a perversion and abomination unless pervaded by the moral and spiritual element. A. E.—It is marvellous that the practical working of the theocracy, as reflected in its writings—the pervading and intensely ethical spirit that characterizes these, and that in respect to the heart not less than the outward conduct—should not alone have been sufficient to convince all of the fundamentally spiritual character of the theocratic constitution and its ordinances of service. If all was merely national, outward, ceremonial, in the framework of the polity, would it not be an inexplicable anomaly that the writings connected with it—its histories, songs, didactic and prophetic discourses—should all be so peculiarly ethical in their tone, and personal in their application? But it was morally impossible that the laws and ordinances of the theocracy could be of such a merely formal and outward character; the spiritual and holy nature of God forbade it; and from that nature everything took its determining and influential form. P. F.

11-15. The Jewish sacrifices did not evince God's pleasure in suffering; they evinced God's hatred of sin. They were not to supersede penitence and faith, but to deepen the conviction by a representation of the death which the offerer of the sacrifice had himself deserved.

There was nothing purifying about that. They were worthless except that they typified the Divine Victim on whom God laid the iniquity of us all. But, above all, we in these evangelical days, heirs of all the ages and of all the economies, should understand why God desires not our sacrifice. Why should He, when He looks upon His own? Christ hath died; then live, ye flocks of Kedar! The Redeemer of the world atones; then crumble, ye altars of mere external worship! The blood is on the mercy-seat; then it need be nowhere else. It need not be on the skirts of the garments, nor in the Temple, nor on the hands of the worshipper.

"That blood we take, that blood alone,
Should make the covenant peace our own."

Bring obedience to God's commands, therefore, and believe Him. He likes that better than sacrifice. Harken to His precepts. He prefers that to the fat of rams. *Punshon.*

The system of sacrifices and ceremonies was not in the centre of the Old Testament religion; it was altogether and utterly upon the outside. It lay within the sphere of the Old Testament religion; but it lay within that sphere only at a distance from the heart and centre of religion and religious life. The great teachers never treat the sacrificial and ritual system as belonging, in any central way, to the Old Testament religion. Read the teachings, read the sermons of the great religious preachers of Israel and Judah. Take the prophets and go through them carefully, and see what they say about religion. If they speak of the rites and ceremonies that were the ritual system of Israel, they do it only to show that they have no part whatever in the true religious life; or they do it simply to show that they stand on the outside of religious life, concerned in religious life only as outside things which religious men will attend to because they were asked of them as religious men by God. That is the most you can say the religious teachers of Israel have said about the system of sacrifices and rituals. There is not a single passage in the Old Testament in which any saint of God connects his sense of forgiveness of sin, his feeling of acceptance with God, the fact that he is accepted of God as a forgiven sinner, his sense of joy in the Divine presence, or his hope of being like God and with God in the future life, literally, figuratively or typically, with the system of sacrifices and rites set before us in the Pentateuch—not one passage. *S. Burnham.*

Sacrifice is still required of men, by the law of the Master; but it is now the sacrifice of

confession, of repentance and restitution, where another has been injured; the sacrifice of whatever is lower in our nature to whatever is higher, of whatever is pleasing in our custom of life to the glory of God, in the welfare of others, or in our own noblest advancement; the sacrifice, always, of ease and inclination to the imperative claims of duty; the sacrifice of a supreme dedication of soul and life to Him from whom our life has come, and by whom the soul, in its marvellous powers, has been ordained. It is rooted, fundamentally, this Christian sacrifice, in the idea of sin, as a force which separates man from God; in the idea of God, who requires self-surrender on the part of His worshippers. It is not, therefore, a sacrifice to be accomplished by the hands, accomplished by another, in grove or glen or solemn Temple. It is to be accomplished within the heart, by each for himself; and the things devoted, the things destroyed, are the very things most natively precious—our passions, appetites and eager desires; the pride which forbids us to acknowledge wrong-doing; the love of enjoyment, which prompts us to use the world for our luxury; the desire for eminent position and power, which seems as native to aspiring spirits as the function of breathing to the lungs. In comparison with these sacrifices, moral, invisible, which have been made by millions uncounted since Jesus showed the Invisible Father to the homage of mankind, the offering of hecatombs of oxen and sheep were a trifling thing. That might involve a small loss of possessions; but this implies the destruction of the passion which insists on possession. That might simply intensify pride, where this overwhelms it; and all sensual desire, all purely secular and selfish ambition, might perfectly consist with external offerings most numerous and costly, even under the solemn Hebrew ritual. But that which the Lord asks, as the primal element in the worship of God, is a complete self-devotion to Him; the offerer and the victim being the same, the scene of the transcendent offering being the soul. *R. S. S.*

13. The calling of assemblies I cannot away with. God speaks of the meetings of His people, the new moon, sacrifices and Sabbaths, as an offence unto Him. The "multitude" of them wearies, and He asks to what purpose are all these busy, frequent, yet empty services. Do not mistake services for service! If we are doing God's work fervently, humbly, patiently, though obscurely, looking to Him alone, we, like our Master, will finish the work that He has given us to do.

Only as we abide in Christ can we be able to complete our work. Mere machinery and outward activity are of no account without this daily dwelling in and drawing from Him. Then our service and our services will be acceptable. *T. Monod.*

13-15. The unquestionable sense of the Hebrew is not merely that their solemn meetings were an iniquity, but that God cannot endure the solemn meeting when thus united with wickedness. When men come before God in worship, let their hands be clean of wickedness; let their hearts reverence and fear the Holy God. *H. C.*—No instituted service, no positive part of religion whatsoever, was ever acceptable when moral duties were neglected; nay, so far from this are they, that God rejects them with abhorrence and disdain. We see from this what was acceptable to God for itself and its own sake in the Jewish religion; and under the Gospel our Saviour prefers a moral duty before any gift (*Matt. 5: 23, 24*). *Abp. Tillotson.*—What God says here to the Jews for their overmultiplied fasts and uncommanded sacrifices, He will say to all who do anything that agrees not with His laws, however specious and plausible, however good and acceptable it may seem to them. God “cannot away with” anything but the performance of His own will. *Bp. Beveridge.*

Formalism does for the present time. It satisfies the man’s conscience; it satisfies his neighbors if he comes to church, if he lives creditably, if he attends the Holy Communion; if, in fact, he has the outside of a Christian. It does very well for this world; yes, but only for this world. *G. Calthrop.*—So of the moralist. All that can be said of him, all that he will say for himself, is that he has had it for his law to speak the truth, fulfil his promises, and deal fairly by his fellow-men. Still it is not, and has never been, his aim or object to do what is right to God; and that is a matter of much higher consequence, and more necessary to his real integrity. God is a person as truly as men are, more closely related to us than they, a better friend, one who has more feeling to be injured than they all, claims of right more sacred. What, then, does it signify that a man gives men their due, and will not give God His? *Bushnell.*

The external part of religion is, doubtless, of little value in comparison with the internal; but if there were no Sundays or holy days, no ministers, no churches or religious assemblies, no prayers or sacraments, no Scriptures read or sermons preached, how long would there be

any religion left in the world; and who would desire to live in a world where there was none? *Horne.*

Most true it is that God has no pleasure in any mere formalities or observances. Inspiration, impulse, liberty, a service of freedom and gladness—this only is His delight. But in order to this, there must also be subjection to His rule, a systematic care, a prescribed obedience of duty, a holy drill of times patiently accepted. The way to find liberty is to come into the schooling of order and law, and let our will be harnessed in a punctual keeping of holy times. Ah! it is a greater thing than you imagine to stand fast in the order and system of a faithful life. Half the benefit you get in holy times, and punctualities, lies in the fact that for Christ’s sake you keep them. You cannot be too rigid in this matter. A loose way makes a loose man. Prove your fidelity by your painstaking, and it will be strange if you do not stand fast even though you stand alone—blessed and great honor this, to stand alone! Such a man has no dull time anywhere, his inspiration is full, his confidence sure, his peace the calm, deep flow of a river. *Bushnell.*

16. God will have nothing to do with uncleanness. “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings,” is the continual voice of God to the human soul. He will pity weakness; He will not be offended by ungainliness; He understands all the meaning of poverty—in all these directions we have nothing to fear; but when we hide uncleanness, or endeavor to make excuse for sin, all heaven burns against us with unquenchable anger. *J. P.*

The pardon of sin upon repentance is expressed in Scripture by cleansing and purifying, to denote that the outward cleansing of the flesh was designed to put men in mind of the inward purification from sin and unrighteousness. *Jenkin.*—What is this but the first word of the Gospel and first branch of the covenant, “Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins”? *Wogan.*

16, 17. Six short precepts unfold the nature of this repentance. “Abstain at once from all acts of oppression and open injustice. Strive, with persevering effort, to attain habits of truth, justice, and kindness to your fellow-men. Be upright yourselves, and set your faces against the wrong-doing of others. Be upright as judges, zealous as advocates, in maintaining the cause of the helpless, whom the proud and selfish would trample in the dust.” *Birke.*

It is a sure sign of hypocrisy to be unrighteous and careless in civil dealings, how conscientious soever thou mayest seem to be in sacred duties. He that seems righteous toward men and is irreligious toward God is but an honest heathen; and he that seems religious toward God and is unrighteous toward men is but a dissembling Christian. To make conscience of one duty and not of another is to make true conscience of neither. The soul that ever had communion with God above comes down, like Moses out of the Mount, with both tables in his hands, the second as well as the first, the first as well as the second. *Swinnock.*

17. The negative exhortation is followed by a positive one. Ceasing to do evil was not enough, or rather was not possible, without beginning to do good. "Learn to do good," implying that they never yet had known what it was. This general expression is explained by several specifications, showing how they were to do good. "Seek judgment"—*i.e.*, justice; not in the abstract, but in act; not for yourselves, but for others; be not content with abstinence from wrong, but seek opportunities of doing justice, especially to those who cannot right themselves. "Redress wrong, judge the fatherless"—*i.e.*, act as a judge for his benefit, or, more specifically, do him justice; "befriend the widow," take her part, espouse her cause. Orphans and widows are continually spoken of in Scripture as special objects of Divine compassion, and as representing the whole class of helpless innocents. *A.*

A masterful man could do what he pleased in the heroic age of ancient Greece, till he met with one more masterful than himself. The widows' and the orphans' cries were then unheeded. Hebrew law abhorred this indifference to right. It threw a shield around the weak, the helpless, the unprotected. It defied the strongest to set its commands at naught. It warned him of a mightier than the mightiest, who regarded the tears of the oppressed, with full purpose of avenging their wrongs. *Sime.*

These verses, in their connection, express with great force the oft-recurring sentiment that God "will have mercy and not sacrifice"—*i.e.*, mercy before and above sacrifice, and will never accept sacrifice or any of the mere forms of religious worship in place of the moral duties of justice and love to man, or as an atonement for their neglect or violation. *H. C.*—Active love is the criterion of judgment of the last day; let not this be ignored, though at the first hearing the word sounds strangely unbelieving. Even the righteous, to whom is ad-

dressed the "Come, ye blessed," cannot restrain the question, "Lord, when saw we Thee hungry and fed Thee, or thirsty and gave Thee drink?" Yet the Lord does not assert that to visit the poor and minister to the sick could obtain for us the kingdom of God as a just recompense; all the gold mines of earth do not conceal the price of heaven. He only points to the infallible characteristic which separates His people from such as merely confess Him with their lips, and places a life of love in the balance against one of selfishness solely, because the first shows more than anything else that we have passed from death unto life. *Van O.*

This world, our own little corner of it, wants sacrifice and labor, running feet and open hands, busy thoughts and gentle tongues—all for Christ and the honor of His Church. The world's ways are not clean; there is too much oppression of the weak by the strong, of the fatherless and widow by cunning and power, of the nobler spirit in man by the meaner senses of him. There is too much cruelty in its habitations; too much darkness on its face; too much filth on its breast. Come and work for it. Its surface is rough, and wants much leveling down and casting up to make it smooth for the Messiah's feet. Believe in Him, and for this end. Confess Him before men, to follow Him in these pathways among the multitude; worship Him in sincerity, that you may gain inward power and love and light and grace for this faithful witnessing from on high. Wait for Him, by watching at the gate, by working in the field. *F. D. H.*

To have all our faculties developed, all our affections raised and purified, and to employ them all in His service whom we love—this, after all, is the truest reward, the loftiest and most complete. And this is the reward that comes to us, not when we are seeking gain or craving reward, but when we are content to do good, hoping for nothing again. The River of Peace runs hard by the Path of Duty; but we shall never find the sweet cool waters while we look for them alone; we shall come on them when we least expect it, and while all our care is to keep the path. *Cor.*

18. The scarlet was regarded as the most fast or fixed of colors. Neither dew, nor rain, nor washing, nor long usage, could remove it. Hence it is used to represent the fixity or permanency of sins in the heart. No human means will wash them out. No effort of man, no external rite, no tears, nor sacrifices, nor prayers, are of themselves sufficient to take them away. They are deeply fixed in the heart, as the scar-

let color was in the web of cloth, and an Almighty power is needful to remove them. The prophet means to say that, although they are thus fixed and immovable by any human means, yet that the mercy of God can take away all the stains. *Kitto.*

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Reasoning with the Lord is very different from reasoning about the Lord. There is little gain in reasoning about the Lord, in reasoning about His existence, in reasoning about His attributes, in reasoning about His eternal and infinite purposes; for all these things are utterly beyond the extremest scope of human wisdom. But there is very great gain in reasoning with the Lord, in bringing to Him our troubles, our fears, our needs, and in applying to our case the teachings of His word, His providence, and His Spirit. In the contemplation of God, faith is worth vastly more than reason. *H. C. T.*

Frankness is due because God is ever frank with us. Frank in rebuke, frank in explanation, frank in forgiveness. He asks us to be frank with Him. "Come, now, let us reason together;" "Bring forth your strong reasons." He therefore invites us to make a clean breast of our secret troubles and sins. This will ever bring blessing. The clearest and best-intentioned openness before man may be misconstrued, but never before God. *J. W. B.*

18-20. The beauty and force of these wonderful words are heightened by their connection. Though your crimes toward your fellow-beings have been bloody and most revolting, and your sacrifices at My altar have been unutterably loathsome; and though for every reason justice seems to demand your sudden and fearful destruction, yet if ye turn to become willing and obedient, ye shall be forgiven and blessed again most abundantly. As said through Jeremiah (31:34), "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more;" or through Micah (7:19), "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." How inexpressibly wonderful! *H. C.*—Forgiveness! This is God's first message to man. Forgiveness free and ample, sure and immediate, conscious and happy, eternal and irreversible. Forgiveness without reserve; forgiveness to the chief of sinners; forgiveness of all sins. In this forgiveness is, of course, wrapt up peace with God, peace of conscience, "the answer of a good conscience toward God," the removal of the heavy burden that weighed the sinner down, of the dark cloud that overshadows all his life. *H. Bonar.*

There is not a case of transgression, magnify

it as you may, which redeeming mercy cannot reach, nor a sin of a dye so deep as to neutralize the purifying efficacy of a Redeemer's atonement. The unpardoned sinner carries his oppressive load of guilt upon the conscience, and at last sinks under its weight to a deep perdition, not because God could not or would not save him, but because he refuses to avail himself of the ample provision which a God of infinite wisdom and mercy has made for his relief. *E. M.*

When we forgive our child, what does it mean? Sometimes, not always, the remission of penalties, but always the remission of the worst penalty, the frown of the father's face, the sense of displeasure weighing on the child's heart, and the unimpeded flow of the parent's love. So God's pardon often leaves some of the natural consequences, which are the penalties of our sins, in order that we may hate and avoid the evil, but it brings the assurance that there is nothing in God's heart toward the sinner but pure and perfect love. All the barriers to its flow are removed by God's own act. None but God can do that. *A. M.*

Even Christ does not undo the wrong past, and make that which has been done as though it never had been done. It never can be made true that the thief did not once steal; but grace may so make over a marred life, that where the blemish was some special beauty may appear. "The oyster mends its shell with a pearl." Where the ugly wound was there comes, with the healing, not a scar, but a pearl. So sins that we truly repent of become pearls in the character. It is the experience of all whose lives grow into Christ-like nobleness, that many of the golden lines of their later lives have been wrought out by their regrets and their repentings of wrong-doings. Even our mistakes and sins, if we leave them and find our way to Christ, will be transmuted into growth and upbuilding of character. "We can so deal with the past, that we can make it give up to us virtue and wisdom." "We can make wrong the seed of right and righteousness; we can transmute error into wisdom; we can make sorrow bloom into a thousand forms, like fragrant flowers." *J. R. M.*

The Bible is wonderful! It teaches man to acknowledge himself vile and even abominable, yet requires him, at the same time, to aspire to a resemblance of God. Were not things thus balanced, either such exaltation would inflate him with pride, or such debasement would drive him to despair. The incarnation discovers to man the greatness of his misery by the greatness of the remedy required. *Pascal.*

Where else but in this Divine word do we learn the dignity and elevation of humility before God ; so that, lying at the footstool of Divine mercy, the contrite and broken heart does not feel degraded, but exalted? Where but here do we see man raised to communion with the Most High—yea, to union with the incarnate Son of God—and yet retain the spirit of lowliness, of self-condemnation, of utter dependence on Divine grace? It is this combination of the full revelation of our sin, disease, and misery, and of the abundant grace of God, which produces in us, in our inmost soul, the *assured conviction of the Divine authority of Scripture*, of God's own voice speaking to us in this inspired word. *Saphir.*

20. This is the converse of the nineteenth verse, a threat corresponding to the promise. *And if ye refuse to comply with My conditions, and rebel, continue to resist My authority, by the sword of the enemy shall ye be eaten.* This is no human menace, but a sure prediction, *for the mouth of Jehovah speaks, not man's.*

21. Here the prophet seems to pause for a reply, and on receiving no response to the promises and invitations of the foregoing context, bursts forth into a sudden exclamation at the change which Israel has undergone, which he then describes both in figurative and literal expressions (verses 21-23). In the verse before us he contrasts her former state, as the chaste bride of Jehovah, with her present pollution, the ancient home of justice with the present haunt of cruelty and violence. *A.*

Verse 23 indicates that her rulers were specially corrupt, rebellious against God in the matter of their official duties, confederate with thieves, encouraging their crime for a share of the plunder ; accepting bribes for unjust decisions, and quite refusing to hear the cause of the fatherless and of the widow, who had no bribe to offer. Considering that, under the Jewish system, their judges were of the priests and the Levites, and likely, therefore, to represent the best piety of the times, these touches give an appalling view of the ungodliness of that age and of the fearful prevalence of depravity and crime. *H. C.*

24-27. The threefold title of God implies the solemn earnestness of the message. He who speaks is the governor of the world, unchangeable in His counsels, whose word cannot fail, mighty to subdue and destroy the proudest rebels. Since His lighter strokes have led to no repentance, His coming judgments shall be more severe ; and only genuine faith and holiness will endure the visitation. But the effect shall be blessed and glorious. The harlot city shall be betrothed once more to the heavenly bridegroom with "lovingkindness and mercies" (Hos. 2 : 19). *Birks.*

25. The purifier puts every vessel into the furnace, and Himself superintends the process ; He allows nothing to be consumed but the dross, and this He will purge from them. They often object to His manner of dealing with them, but He says, "I will turn mine hand upon thee, I will purge thee in the furnace of thy dross, and will take away all thine alloy." *Jas. Smith.*

30. The mention of trees and gardens, as places of idolatrous worship, suggests a beautiful comparison, under which the destruction of the idolaters is again set forth. They who choose trees and gardens, in preference to God's appointed place of worship, shall themselves be like trees and gardens, but in the most alarming sense. *For*, in answer to the tacit question why they should be ashamed and confounded for their oaks and gardens, *ye shall be like an oak or terebinth, fading in its leaf, and like a garden which has no water*—a lively emblem, to an Oriental reader, of entire desolation.

31. A closing threat of sudden, total, instantaneous destruction to the Jewish idolaters, to be occasioned by the very things which they preferred to God, and in which they confided. *And the strong, the mighty man, alluding no doubt to the unjust rulers of the previous context, shall become tow*, an exceedingly inflammable substance, *and his work*, his idols, often spoken of in Scripture as the work of men's hands, shall become a *spark*, the means and occasion of destruction to their worshippers, *and they shall burn both of them together*, and there shall be no one quenching or to quench them. *A.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTERS II., III., IV.

2:1 THE word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2 And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills ; and all nations
3 shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob ; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths : for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the
4 LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge between the nations, and shall reprove many peoples : and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks : nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.
5, 6 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD. For thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be filled *with customs* from the east, and *are* soothsayers like the Philistines, and they strike hands with the children of strangers.
7 Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures ; their
8 land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots. Their land also is full of idols ; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have
9 made. And the mean man is bowed down, and the great man is brought low : therefore
10 forgive them not. Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, from before the terror of
11 the LORD, and from the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be brought low, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in
12 that day. For there shall be a day of the LORD of hosts upon all that is proud and haughty,
13 and upon all that is lifted up ; and it shall be brought low : and upon all the cedars of
14 Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan ; and upon all the
15 high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up ; and upon every lofty tower, and
16 upon every fenced wall ; and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant imagery.
17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought
18 low : and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols shall utterly pass
19 away. And men shall go into the caves of the rocks, and into the holes of the earth, from
before the terror of the LORD, and from the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake
20 mightily the earth. In that day a man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of
21 gold, which they made for him to worship, to the moles and to the bats ; to go into the caverns of the rocks, and into the clefts of the ragged rocks, from before the terror of the
LORD, and from the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake mightily the earth.
22 Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils : for wherein is he to be accounted of ?

3:1 For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from
2 Judah stay and staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water ; the mighty man,
3 and the man of war ; the judge, and the prophet, and the diviner, and the ancient ; the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the
4 skilful enchanter. And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them.
5 And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour : the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honour-
6 able. When a man shall take hold of his brother in the house of his father, *saying*, Thou
7 hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand : in that day shall he lift up *his voice*, saying, I will not be an healer ; for in my house is neither bread nor cloth-
8 ing : ye shall not make me ruler of the people. For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen : because their tongue and their doings are against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of
9 his glory. The shew of their countenance doth witness against them ; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul ! for they have rewarded evil unto
10 themselves. Say ye of the righteous, that *it shall be well with him* : for they shall eat the
11 fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked ! *it shall be ill with him* : for the reward of his
12 hands shall be given him. As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of
13, 14 thy paths. The LORD standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the peoples. The

LORD will enter into judgement with the elders of his people, and the princes thereof : It is
 15 ye that have eaten up the vineyard ; the spoil of the poor is in your houses : what mean ye
 that ye crush my people, and grind the face of the poor ? saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts.
 16 Moreover the LORD said, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with
 stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a
 17 tinkling with their feet : therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of
 18 the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will lay bare their secret parts. In that day the Lord
 19 will take away the bravery of their anklets, and the cauls, and the crescents ; the pendants,
 20 and the bracelets, and the mufflers ; the headtires, and the ankle chains, and the sashes, and
 21, 22 the perfume boxes, and the amulets ; the rings, and the nose jewels ; the festival robes,
 23 and the mantles, and the shawls, and the satchels ; the hand mirrors, and the fine linen, and
 24 the turbans, and the veils. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet spices there shall
 be rottenness ; and instead of a girdle a rope ; and instead of well set hair baldness ; and
 25 instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth : branding instead of beauty. Thy men shall
 26 fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. And her gates shall lament and mourn ; and
 4 : 1 she shall be desolate and sit upon the ground. And seven women shall take hold of one
 man in that day, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel : only let us
 be called by thy name ; take thou away our reproach.
 2 In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land
 3 shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass,
 that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even
 4 every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem : when the Lord shall have washed
 away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from
 5 the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgement, and by the spirit of burning. And the LORD
 will create over the whole habitation of mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud and
 smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night : for over all the glory *shall be spread*
 6 a canopy. And there shall be a pavilion for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and
 for a refuge and for a covert from storm and from rain.

CHAPS. 2-4 constitute one message, introduced by one rich Messianic prophecy (2 : 2-4), and closed with another (4 : 2-6). The intermediate portion details the sins of the people, and threatens sore judgments. This prophecy affords no decisive indications of its date. H. C.—These chapters constitute the second prophecy, the two grand themes of which are the reign of the Messiah and intervening judgments on the Jews for their iniquities. The first and greatest of these subjects occupies the smallest space, but stands both at the opening and the close of the whole prophecy. A.—The first verse is their common title. The message has five parts : (1) The Vision of Zion's Future Glory (2 : 1-5) ; (2) The Sin and Judgment of Judah (2 : 6-22) ; (3) Their Political Downfall (3 : 1-15) ; (4) The Sentence on Zion's Daughters (3 : 16 to 4 : 1) ; and lastly (5) The Promise of Coming Deliverance (4 : 2-6). *Birks.*

2 : 2-4. This passage occurs with no material variation in Micah 4 : 1-4. It stands there in manifest connection with what precedes in the close of chap. 3. Here no such connection appears. It can never be known absolutely which of these prophets (if either) quoted from the other. H. C.

Here the Church is represented as being

central and accessible to the entire race, and as capable of receiving and accommodating a worshipping world, as the temple on Zion had been to the tribes of Israel. And the points to be particularly remarked are, that of the nations thronging to it, the great mass has been influenced by the exhortation, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah ;" and that the reason which moves the world toward this central point is, that "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem"—that through the appointed instrumentality of the Gospel, they hope to be made wise unto salvation ; while the result of that Divine teaching upon the great society of the nations is to be the utter abolition of war, the cultivation of the arts of peace, and the recognition of the Divine authority as universal and supreme. *J. Harris.*

2. The mountain of the Lord's house. From the situation of the Jewish Temple on Mount Moriah, a mountain is made to stand for the Christian Church ; of the exaltation of which, and its wonderful prosperity and enlargement, this passage is a prophetic promise. *Bp. Hurd.*

3. There "He will teach us of His ways." God's ways are to be learned in His Church, in

communion with His people and in the use of instituted ordinances ; the ways of duty which He requires us to walk in, the ways of grace in which He walks toward us. It is God that teaches His people by His Word and Spirit. It is worth while to take pains to go up to His holy mountain to be taught His ways, for those who are willing to take that pains shall never find it labor in vain. Then "shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." H.

That the Lord is King of all the earth, and that He will eventually establish His kingdom, is the broad and general way of stating the prophetic character of Scripture, and it is one that is incontrovertible, while the character itself is without parallel elsewhere. Exclusive as the Jewish nation was, it was nevertheless profoundly impressed with the consciousness of having a mission to the whole world, and possessing a knowledge of God that would one day be confessed. And it is no insignificant fact that the entire Christian Church has accepted that knowledge as authentic, and so far confessed the mission of Israel to have been Divine. This circumstance alone is a striking commentary on such words as "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The Lord thy God, O Zion, shall be King forevermore and throughout all generations" (Ps. 146 : 10). *Leathes.*

4. God shall administer His government over the nations, rebuking their sins and securing radical reform. The instance cited as both proof and specimen is the cessation of all war ; the conversion of its implements into those of husbandry, and the utter disuse of the study and drill which prepare men for war. Considering what desolations, moral and physical, war has wrought ; how deeply its causes have been imbedded in human selfishness ; and, moreover, what mischiefs have come of learning war, it must be admitted that this illustrative case bears in it volumes of precious meaning. If under the universal diffusion of God's law war shall cease, so shall all other moral and social evils. The very heart of man will be renewed ; human society will be regenerated. H. C.

Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Throughout the prophets the time of the Messiah is represented as a time of universal peace and godliness, in which the natures of men should be changed, and all malice and ill nature rooted out. He Himself is called "the Prince of Peace." The spiritual sense implies Christ's being the great Peace maker, who should reconcile both Jews and

Gentiles to God and to each other. If we look upon this and like prophecies as foretelling the outward peacefulness of the kingdom or Church of Christ, they seem to relate to some future flourishing state of the Church, when, after having subdued all His enemies, He shall give rest unto His faithful servants. *W. Louth.*

5. From this distant prospect of the calling of the Gentiles, the prophet now reverts to his own times and countrymen, and calls upon them not to be behind the nations in the use of their distinguishing advantages. If even the heathen were one day to be enlightened, surely they who were already in possession of the light ought to make use of it. A.

Christ is revealed in His Book. The sacred page is a living word—the voice of God. The Bible, in its simplicity, its calm authoritative-ness and its directness, finds us at the centres of our being, enters into our life and makes of us a new creature. The Bible is therefore the source of light, sweetness, and life. It brings us into direct relations with God and Christ, and therefore becomes to us the means whereby we may be holy as God is holy. Not the righteousness of man, but the righteousness of Christ, becomes ours. By Christ we are made partakers of the Divine nature and heritors of a perfection which would have been impossible had not Jesus Christ lived and died upon the earth. *Interior.*

6-8. The exhortation in verse 5 implied that the Jews were not actually walking in God's light, but were alienated from Him, a fact which is now explicitly asserted and the reason of it given—viz., illicit intercourse with foreign nations, as evinced by the adoption of their superstitious practices, reliance on their martial and pecuniary aid, and last, but worst of all, the worship of their idols. A.

10. Terrible judgments from God are thought of as already present, and the prophet exhorts them to flee for safety to the rocks and caves of the mountains, such as could be readily found in the hill country of Judea. It would be awful to meet God clothed with vengeance !

12-16. Cedars, oaks, mountains, hills, towers, walls, ships, and pictures are here representatives of human pride. The prophet's meaning is that the pride and the proud men that they represent shall be utterly abased. H. C.—Pride sets a man in opposition against God. Other sins are aversions from God, but this sin is a coming against God. In other sins a man flies from God ; but in this sin a man flies upon God. "God resisteth the proud" (Jas. 4 : 6). *T. Brooks.*

22. He shows the folly of transferring their confidence in idols to human patrons, by a general statement of man's weakness and mortality, explained and amplified in the following chapter. "Cease ye from man" (cease to trust him or depend upon him), "whose breath is in his nostrils" (whose life is transient and precarious, with obvious allusion to Gen. 2:7), "for wherein is he to be accounted of" (or at what rate is he to be valued)? A.—In the line of the prophet's thought, thus: Why trust in man, whom you may see fleeing, panic-stricken, before the majesty of Jehovah when He ariseth to smite the earth with terror? H. C.

Chap. 3. From the grand moral features of the judgment the prophet turns to describe those great evils in the State which would prepare its way. The bulwarks of the kingdom would be withdrawn, and the whole fabric sink into ruin. *Birks.*

1. This verse assigns as a reason for the exhortation in the one preceding (2:22), that God was about to take away from the people every ground of reliance, natural and moral. Cease ye from man—*i.e.*, cease to trust in any human protection, "For, behold" (implying a proximate futurity) "the Lord" (God considered as a sovereign) "Jehovah of Hosts" (as self-existent and eternal, and at the same time as the God of revelation and the God of His people) "is taking away" (or about to take away) "from Jerusalem and from Judah" (not only from the capital, but from the whole kingdom) "the stay and the staff" (*i.e.*, all kinds of support, and first of all), "the whole stay of bread and the whole stay of water" (the natural and necessary means of subsistence). The terms are applicable either to a general famine produced by natural causes, or to a scarcity arising from invasion or blockade, such as actually took place when Judah was overrun by Nebuchadnezzar. A.

4. Ahaz came to the throne at twenty, Manasseh at twelve, and the reigns of Amon, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, Zedekiah, ended at the ages of twenty-four, twenty-three, thirty-six, eighteen, and thirty-two years. The want of all wisdom in the rulers would cause a rank growth of lawlessness and oppression. The first commandment with promise being thus despised, a curse must follow. Young children disobedient to parents, arrogant and rude to their elders, are one of the plainest portents of national ruin near at hand. *Birks.*

5. As the preceding verse describes bad government, so this describes anarchy, the suspension of all government, and a consequent dis-

order in the relations of society, betraying itself in mutual violence, and in the disregard of natural and artificial claims to deference. "And the people shall act tyrannically, man against man, and man against his fellow. They shall be insolent, the youth to the old man, and the mean man to the noble."

6, 7. Having predicted the removal of those qualified to govern, the rise of incompetent successors, and a consequent insubordination and confusion, the prophet now describes this last as having reached such a height that no one is willing to hold office, or, as Matthew Henry says, "the government goes a-begging." A.—The condition of the State is so bad that no man is willing to hold office in it. This is put by a special case. A man living quietly at home in the house of his father (*in* the house, rather "of" the house), according to patriarchal usage, is pressed by his brother to take the office of ruler, but positively refuses. He will not take this responsibility of trying to restore a ruined State. These graphic touches indicate both the general destitution and the utter prostration of civil society and government.

8. This explains why the people are without bread, clothing or rulers. Their words and deeds have been utterly "against the Lord," contemptuously hostile and defiant. Surely the Lord would have us understand that He has keen sensibilities to the outrages of sin, and that he feels the abuse and wrong which the sinner perpetrates upon Him. Is anything more sensitive to violence than the eye?

9. These are bold sinners, of shameless, unblushing brow and bearing. The expression of their countenance witnesses to their heart sin. Woe to their souls, for they bring ruin upon themselves! H. C.—The sins of the people, like those of Sodom, are bringing down the fierce anger of God, and to the prophet's eye their ruin seems as if already come. Pride and lust are written on their very faces, and cannot be concealed. Nay, so shameless are they grown they do not even try to conceal them. Effrontery doubles their guilt, and makes judgment inevitable. When vice grows bold and shameless, woe to the guilty land! *Birks.*

10, 11. The Lord is not a bare spectator, He is both a rewarder and an avenger. Therefore, from the ground of this truth, that the Lord seeth all our ways and counteth all our steps, we, as the prophet exhorts, may "say to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." We may also say, "Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his

hands shall be given him." Only idols which have eyes and see not, have hands and strike not. *Caryl*.

10. The righteous are encouraged by the assurance that the judgments of God shall not be indiscriminate. "Say ye of the righteous that it shall be well, for the fruits of their doings they shall eat." The object of address seems to be not the prophets or ministers of God, but the people at large or men indefinitely. A.—No righteous man would, in his right mind, be willing to make an exchange of his smartest afflictions for a wicked man's prosperity, with all the circumstances attending. It cannot, therefore, be bad with the righteous in the worst condition. *Charnock*.—The reward of right living, or of seeking after righteousness of life, is sure, because it is among the promises of God. Truthfulness, charitableness, peaceableness—these are primary characteristics of the true followers of the Master. These are graces which may be possessed by the humblest disciples; by those who cannot do "great things" in the eyes of men, but who long to do "right things" in the eyes of God. Now we are assured that, to the truthful, new views of Divine truth will be unfolded; to the gracious and charitable, new conceptions of God's love will be imparted; to the peaceable, enjoyment of the peace which truly passes all understanding will be vouchsafed. *Interior*.

Nothing of character is really permanent but virtue and personal worth. These remain. Whatever of excellence is wrought into the soul itself belongs to both worlds. Real goodness does not attach itself merely to this life; it points to another world. Political or professional reputation cannot last forever; but a conscience void of offence before God and man is an inheritance for eternity. Religion, therefore, is a necessary and indispensable element in any great human character. There is no living without it. Religion is the tie that connects man with his Creator, and holds him to his throne. If that tie be all sundered, be all broken, he floats away, a worthless atom in the universe; its proper attractions all gone, its destiny thwarted, and its whole future nothing but darkness, desolation and death. A man with no sense of religious duty is he whom the Scriptures describe, in such terse but terrific language, as living "without God in the world." Such a man is out of his proper being, out of the circle of all his duties, out of the circle of all his happiness, and away, far, far away, from the purposes of his creation. *Webster*.

11. Woe unto the wicked, for the reward of his hands shall be given him.

The determination of character is in man's own power; for he may get from God what elements of good he pleases, and may have whatever of evil he pleases taken away. The good is of God, and if a man sows that, he shall eat the fruit of it. The bad is of man and Satan, and if a man chooses that, he shall eat of the fruit of that. The warning against it and the salvation from it are of God. The misery consequent upon it is of the sinner's own self, and not of God; though God is the security, both to the righteous and the wicked, of having their respective wages paid to them. "I will bring evil on this people," says God, "even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened to My words, nor to My law, but have rejected them. Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings; but they that plough iniquity and sow wickedness shall reap the same." This throws all consequences, even for eternity, back upon character. Character produces consequences, and is the great lord of destiny forever. God tells us that character formed according to His word, by His counsel, is safe, and forms a security of happiness for eternity; but otherwise it is a security of shame and misery, the shame and misery being the inevitable result and production of an irreligious character. And God, by the freedom with which He lets consequences come down even in this world, which confessedly is not the world of retribution, but of restraint, shows us what may be expected when consequences shall have their full swing and development, when complete justice shall be administered, and men shall be judged according to the fruit of their doings as well as the nature of their character. *Cheever*.

So long as God is in the universe every soul that is in the universe must feel His power. No space can be so wide, no time so long as to exhaust His influence. He that obeys must feel the ever-present God in joy. He that disobeys must feel Him in pain everywhere and forever. These are the terrible necessities of obedience and disobedience. We may state it, the Bible often does state it, judicially. We may speak of God's vengeance. But greater and truer than any picture of angry vengeance, more solemn, more sublime, more impressive to the fear of a reasonable and thoughtful man, there is the mighty image of God standing in the centre of things. And all things have to touch Him. And as all things touch Him, according

to their characters, He becomes to them blessing or cursing. He is the happiness of obedience and the misery of disobedience throughout His world. He looks with sympathetic joy or with profoundest pity on the souls He judges, but the judgments both come from Him. The right hand and the left hand are both His. Burning there like the sun to all the world, He must be a comforting and guiding light, or a consuming fire—one or the other—to every soul.

Phillips Brooks.

Sometimes the wicked eat here in this world of the fruit of their own doings. They receive in themselves that recompense of their error which is meet. This is the case both physically and mentally. The habits of intemperance, of self-indulgence, of the violation of what are called the laws of nature, both of the body and the mind, are followed, after a certain period, with hopeless and incurable misery. Men of intemperate minds experience plenty of warnings as to the conclusion to which their passions are hurrying them; a conclusion as fixed as fate, when habit passes with its owner beyond the world of grace into a world where destiny is determined by character, and character is the sum and expression of all preceding habit. Our passions, even in this world, if we give way to them, are all turned into diseases that prey upon ourselves, making the recesses of our being like sepulchral caves inhabited by legions of evil spirits.

Cheever.

‘Say to the righteous, it shall be well with him: woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him,’ is the voice of both Testaments. For under the New, which brings life and immortality to light, we are still assured that “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” But while both the older and the newer revelation of the Divine character and intent thus supplement each other, it is to be observed that it takes the completed life of man to sum up reward and penalty. The revelation by the prophets had chiefly to do with man’s earthly experience; that by the Son had chiefly to do with man’s future blessedness. At the harvest home the minister takes his text from the Old Testament; at the bedside of the dying or at the head of the bier he chooses his Scripture lesson from the New. It takes a wise and well-balanced Christian to so faithfully embrace the two covenants in his creed that his piety be neither mystic nor materialistic. Even in Old Testament times, when the faith of God’s people was supported the rather by reference to temporal rewards, there were exceptions to the

rule so notable as to force the most godly to cry out, “How doth God know; and is there knowledge with the Most High?” It was when poverty and bereavement and sickness fell upon such a life that the faith of the servant of Jehovah “had almost slipped.” It was only when he went into the house of God and “understood the latter end” of the sinner and the righteous that the sun again broke over the darkened soul. It is thus even in the days when the supports of faith were chiefly in visible rewards that the soul was oftentimes driven to seek refuge in the unseen world. At no time have the spirits most in touch with God understood the promises of temporal blessings as other than conditional, so given that while their general fulfilment confirmed faith their not less evident exceptions did not destroy it.

It cannot be doubted, by those most intimately conversant with the spiritual life of the day, that some of our most devout disciples suffer from a teaching which exaggerates the assurance of temporal prosperity while intending only to honor the word. Assuming that wealth and health are “good things,” the promise that “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly,” seems conclusive that worldly prosperity and freedom from pain are assured to the faithful disciple. A thorn in the flesh becomes therefore the evidence of unfaithfulness, and the loss of flocks and herds by the Sabeans the sure token of Divine displeasure; ignoring the most evident fact that the one was thrust upon the most eminent New Testament saint and the other befell the only man whom the Old Testament calls “perfect.” It ought never to be forgotten that the Divine intent has but “a single eye.” God’s purpose is “not enjoyment and not sorrow,” but “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Rule and exception are both subservient to the one purpose, the image of God in the life of the believer. The very disciple who preached the Gospel as containing within itself the “promise of the life that now is” had “suffered the loss of all things,” and yet rejoiced with “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” To preach that the upright man will never know Job’s boils or Paul’s thorn in the flesh is to spread a net for the feet of the unwary; to preach that the consecration of any portion of our substance to the Lord will save us from the results of bad business habits or rash investments is to promise what God has nowhere assured. But to say that neither the height of prosperity nor the depth of want shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, is to preach

a Gospel good for every age and needed by every soul. *Interior.*

12. Cause thee to err. There are persons whose company always betrays us into slandering or scoffing, or bitter envy, or hypocrisy, or some evil passion; there are places in which we cannot maintain, or have at least never yet maintained, even our usual regard to the will of God, and from which we return less disposed than we ought to remember Christ, or engage in any religious duty; there are books we read, or trains of thought we indulge in, which lower our tone and unhinge the mind for serious, vigorous and devout exercise. Now it is very often the case that it is quite at our option that we thus put ourselves in the way of temptation. *Dods.*

15. The Lord's address to the elders of Israel is continued in a tone of indignant expostulation. "What mean ye" (literally, *what is to you*, equivalent in English to what have you —*i.e.*, what right, what reason, what motive, what advantage) "that ye crush My people" (a common figure for severe oppression, Job 5 : 4; Prov. 22 : 22) "and grind the faces of the poor" (upon the ground, by trampling on their bodies, another strong figure for contemptuous and oppressive violence), "saith the Lord Jehovah of Hosts" (which is added to remind the accused of the sovereign authority, omniscience and omnipotence of Him by whom the charge is brought against them).

16, 17. The prophet here resumes the thread which had been dropped or broken at the close of verse 12, and recurs to the undue predominance of female influence, but particularly to the prevalent excess of female luxury, not only as sinful in itself, but as a chief cause of the violence and social disorder previously mentioned, and therefore to be punished by disease, widowhood, and shameful exposure.

18-23. Although the prediction in verse 17 implies the loss of all ornaments whatever, we have now a minute specification of the things to be taken away. This specification had a double use: it made the judgment threatened more explicit and significant to those whom it concerned, while to others it gave some idea of the length to which extravagance in dress was carried.

25. The prophet now assigns as a reason for the grief predicted in verse 24, a general slaughter of the male population, the effect of which is again described in verse 26, and its extent in chap. 4 : 1, which belongs more directly to this chapter than the next. In the verse before us he first addresses Zion or Jerusalem di-

rectly, but again, as it were, turns away, and in the next verse speaks of her in the third person. *A.*

Chap. 4 : 1. In the current sentiments of the Hebrew people, the love of offspring was intensely strong, and the reproach of being childless and unmarried was extreme. The case here stated implies that the male population had been cut off by destructive wars, as said in chap. 3 : 25. Hence the usual numerical equality of the two sexes was broken up, and the greatest solicitude was felt for the future welfare of society. It therefore becomes one indication of great public calamity that seven women (a large indefinite number) should take hold (earnestly, if not violently) of one man, saying, "We will provide our own bread and clothing, only let us bear thy name; take away our reproach."

2-6. The tone of discourse changes; the Messiah appears coming forth from God on the one hand, and on the other, born of woman, and so of the earth. The remnant who have escaped these fearful visitations of judgment are purified by discipline and become holy; are also shielded from every danger and protected from all evil by this glorious personage. They repose under His shadow and find in Him an everlasting and perfect refuge. *H. C.*—It is commonly agreed that this prediction has been only partially fulfilled, and that its complete fulfilment is to be expected, not in the literal Mount Zion or Jerusalem, but in those various assemblies or societies of true believers, which now possess in common the privileges once exclusively enjoyed by the holy city and the chosen race of which it was the centre and metropolis.

2. At this point the prophet passes from the tone of threatening to that of promise. Having foretold a general destruction, he now intimates that some should escape it, and be rendered glorious and happy by the presence and favor of the Son of God, who is at the same time the Son of Man. "In that day" (after this destruction) "shall the branch" (or offspring) "of Jehovah be for honor and for glory, and the fruit of the earth for sublimity and beauty, to the escaped of Israel." *A.*

This conception of a shoot springing up from its root appears frequently in the Hebrew prophets. Isaiah uses various parallel terms, and not exclusively this one rendered branch. Thus, in 11 : 1 "a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots," but even this word rendered branch is a new one. So also in chap. 53 : 2, "a tender plant, a root out of dry

ground." But later prophets concentrate very much upon this word *branch*, as may be seen in Jer. 23 : 5, "I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper;" also Jer. 33 : 15, "I will cause the branch of righteousness to grow up unto David," etc. So in Zech. 3 : 8, "I will bring forth my servant, Branch;" and also 6 : 12, "Behold the man whose name is Branch." Thus remarkably the usage finally culminates in making this his proper name. No fact could more clearly prove an established Jewish usage of this term to denote their expected Messiah. This is the interpretation also of the Chaldee Paraphrast, one of the oldest records of Jewish opinion. The thing affirmed here of the Messiah, thought of as at first only a weak and tender shoot, is that He shall become a glory and honor, a thing of beauty and exaltation to all the escaped ones of Israel. From the most humble beginnings He shall rise to the loftiest dignity, to be admired, loved, adored as the glorious Deliverer and King of His people.

3, 4. The special points made here are that these blessings from the great Messiah shall come to all the survivors of Israel; that their essential and most vital element shall be real holiness, than which nothing can be better,

and that this holiness shall come to Israel as a result of the washing away of her filth and blood by God's discipline, coupled with the power of the Divine Spirit. H. C.

5. A cloud and smoke by day, etc.

This is a manifest allusion to the pillar of a cloud, and of fire, which attended the Jews in their passage out of Egypt; and to the glory that rested on the tabernacle (Ex. 40 : 38. See Zech. 2 : 5). Both passages mean, the visible presence of God shall protect the Church. *Bp. Lowth.*

6. And there shall be a tabernacle.

And whereas the Church shall be still subject to the scorching heats and tempestuous storms of persecution, God shall erect a safe tabernacle for her, to shade her from the heat and shelter her from those violent tempests. *Bp. H.*

Comparing this closing prophecy with that which commences the message (chap. 2 : 2-4), *that* gives only a general view of the results of His reign upon the nations; *this* is a more specific view of the origin and person of the Messiah; of the holiness of His people, and of His special relation to them as Redeemer, Protector, and bosom Friend. Both are precious, magnificent predictions. H. C.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER V.

- 5 : 1** LET me sing for my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My 2 wellbeloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill : and he made a trench about it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out a winepress therein : and he looked that it should bring 3 forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and 4 men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it 5 should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard : I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up ; 6 I will break down the fence thereof, and it shall be trodden down : and I will lay it waste ; it shall not be pruned nor hoed ; but there shall come up briers and thorns : I will also 7 command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant : and he looked for judgement, but behold oppression ; for righteousness, but behold a cry.
- 8 Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room, and 9 ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land ! In mine ears *saieth* the LORD of hosts, 10 Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant. For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield *but* an ephah.
- 11 Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink ; 12 that tarry late into the night, till wine inflame them ! And the harp and the lute, the tabret and the pipe, and wine, are *in* their feasts : but they regard not the work of the LORD, 13 neither have they considered the operation of his hands. Therefore my people are gone into

- captivity, for lack of knowledge : and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude are parched with thirst. Therefore hell hath enlarged her desire, and opened her mouth without measure : and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth among them, descend *into it*. And the mean man is bowed down, and the great man is humbled, and the eyes of the lofty are humbled : but the LORD of hosts is exalted in judgement, and God the Holy One is sanctified in righteousness. Then shall the lambs feed as in their pasture, and the waste places of the fat ones shall wanderers eat.
- Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope : that say, Let him make speed, let him hasten his work, that we may see it : and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it !
- Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil ; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness ; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter !
- Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight !
- Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink : which justify the wicked for a reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him ! Therefore as the tongue of fire devoureth the stubble, and as the dry grass sinketh down in the flame, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust : because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.
- Therefore is the anger of the LORD kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them, and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss for them from the end of the earth : and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly : none shall be weary nor stumble among them ; none shall slumber nor sleep ; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken : whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent ; their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind : their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions : yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and carry it away safe, and there shall be none to deliver. And they shall roar against them in that day like the roaring of the sea : and if one look unto the land, behold darkness and distress, and the light is darkened in the clouds thereof.

Chap. 5. This chapter contains a description of the prevalent iniquities of Judah, and of the judgments which, in consequence of these, had been or were to be inflicted on the people. The form of the prophecy is peculiar, consisting of a parable and a commentary on it. The prophet first delivers his whole message in a parabolic form (verses 1-7). He then explains and amplifies it at great length (verses 8-30).

The parable sets forth the peculiar privileges, obligations, guilt, and doom of Israel under the figure of a highly favored vineyard, which, instead of good fruit, brings forth only wild grapes, and is therefore given up to desolation (verses 1-6). The application is expressly made by the prophet himself (verse 7). In the remainder of the chapter he enumerates the sins which were included in the general expressions of verse 7, and describes their punishment. In doing this, he first gives a catalogue of sins with their appropriate punishments annexed (verses 8-24). He then describes the means used to inflict them, and the final issue (verses 25-30).

This chapter, like the first, is applicable not to one event exclusively, but to a sequence of events which was repeated more than once, although its terms were never fully realized until the closing period of the Jewish history, after the true Messiah was rejected, when one ray of hope was quenched after another, until all grew dark forever in the skies of Israel. A.

1-7. Elsewhere in the Scriptures the Lord's people are His vineyard, with reference to the careful culture He had given them, and the failure of the reasonably expected fruits. (See Ps. 80 : 8-16 ; Jer. 2 : 21 ; Ezek. 19 : 10-14, and Matt. 21 : 33-44.) This last, a parable by our Lord, has points of close resemblance to the one before us, especially in the main feature of keeping back the purposed application until the hearers had passed judgment upon the case, and then showing them that they had righteously condemned themselves. H. C.

4. What could have been done more that I have not done ? They had everything requisite for instruction and direction in their duty, for the quickening of them

to it, and putting of them in mind of it: no inducements were wanting to persuade them to it, but all arguments were used proper to work either upon hope or fear; and they had all the opportunities they could desire for the performance of their duty, the new moons, and the Sabbaths, and solemn feasts; they had the Scriptures, the lively oracles, a standing ministry in the priests and Levites, besides what was extraordinary in the prophets. No nation had statutes and judgments so righteous. H.—He gave them His will, His ordinances, His prophets, and separated them from all nations by peculiar rites, that they might be to Him for a name, and a praise, and a peculiar treasure, above all nations. He has done much more for us under the Gospel. None can be ignorant of the intention of God in all these provisions. *R. Hall.*

The untiring and unceasing work of God's compassion on earth is to bring human hearts out of unconcern to the hearty longing for Christ—for His love, His grace, His life. It is to stir and awaken that desire, which never is despised if it is sincere, and never disappointed if it is persevering. For this the Holy Spirit keeps up His inward and invisible solicitation, speaking through the conscience. For this the providential plan of each individual life is shaped and carried on, with its daily discipline. For this the prophets rebuke, the apostles teach, the martyrs die. For this the Scriptures are written, the Gospel is preached, the Church is planted and extended, the sacraments are ministered, the prayers are offered. For this—all ye whose groans are relieved or smothered—whose tears fall or are forced back upon their fountains in fear or shame—whose springs of joy are dry as summer dust, whose career is a failure, and whose ambition is dead—for this you are "tired and discouraged," scourged and lonely—that you might "want" some voice to "speak to you about Christ and His love;" nay, that you might want to see Jesus Himself. *F. D. H.*

5, 6. Since all culture seems wasted on this vineyard, the owner resolves to change his course and abandon it to sterility. Its fences shall be removed, and the wild boar of the forest and the beast of the field be let in to waste and devour. The showers of blessing shall be withdrawn. The meaning of the parable and the cause of these threatenings are then explained together. The vineyard is the house of Israel and the men of Judah; and the reason of these judgments is the crime and violence that fill their land. *Birks.*—God in a

way of righteous judgment denies His grace to those that have long received it in vain. The sum of all is that they who would not bring forth good fruit should bring forth none. The curse of barrenness is the punishment of the sin of barrenness (as Mark 11:14). This had its accomplishment, in part, in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, its full accomplishment in the final rejection of the Jews, and has its frequent accomplishment in the departure of God's Spirit from those persons who have long resisted Him and striven against Him, and the removal of His Gospel from those places that have been long a reproach to it, while it has been an honor to them. H.

It is just as true that God is everywhere about us, always mindful of our wants, though we never think of Him. It is just as true that Christ comes to us by the bright lessons of His example and the melting doctrines of His death, though we turn our backs alike on the manger and the cross. It is just as true that we are pressing onward to eternity, though we grasp after present pleasure, and think not of the future. Truth is perfect and immutable amid all the weakness and changes of man. God is not indifferent when He finds His paternal love slighted and despised. Christ is not unaffected when we turn coldly away from His tender entreaties, though He come repeatedly with the expostulation, "How often would I, but ye would not." *Homer.*—Well, then, O child of man, may the God of heaven and earth exclaim, "Judge ye between Me and My vineyard!" Well, then, may we heed the awful menace uttered in the song of the vineyard. A nation, a church, a house, a heart, where the grace of God has been received in vain, cannot fail to be an object of His righteous displeasure. *Van O.*

7. This incidental and quiet showing that the owner of the vineyard is truly the God of Israel is at once beautiful and striking. He is one who can speak to the clouds in tones of lofty command—and they obey! The secret is now out and the prophet has only to put the moral of the parable before the people in explicit terms. "For" (as you will see from His authority over the clouds) the Lord Jehovah is the owner and the cultivator of this vineyard. His vineyard is the house of Israel and the men of Judah are the plant, the vine, upon which He so much sets His heart. He looked for justice, but behold only injustice; for righteousness, but lo, He hears only the outcries of the wronged and crushed. This indicates what special fruit the Lord expected—viz., moral uprightness and a fraternal bearing toward all

fellow-men. Especially He did *not* expect and could not bear man's heartless oppression of His brother-man! The points of moral instruction made prominent in this parable are that God's gifts of truth, light as to duty, moral culture and opportunities for doing good, create peculiar obligations to be morally fruitful, to do justice and to love mercy. Men so blessed with privileges must be held to a stern accountability. Failing to meet this, they must expect that God will take away their privileges and give them to others who will render the fruits in their season. See the doctrine of our Lord on this point (Matt. 21 : 43). H. C.

8. Here begins a detailed specification of the sins included in the general expressions of verse 7. We have first two woes pronounced against as many sins, each followed by a threatening of appropriate punishment, and a general threatening which applies to both (verses 8-17). The first sin thus denounced is that of ambitious and avaricious grasping after property, not merely in opposition to the peculiar institutions of the law, but to the fundamental principles of morals, connected as it always is with a neglect of charitable duties and a willingness to sacrifice the good of others. The verse before us may be understood, however, as descriptive rather of the tendency and aim of this ambitious grasping than of its actual effects. *Woe to the joiners of house with house, or those making house touch house, field to field they bring together.*

9, 10. The inordinate desire of lands and houses shall be punished with the loss of them. And first He threatens that the valuable houses which they coveted and gained by fraud or violence shall one day be left empty, an event implying the death, captivity, or degradation of their owners. A.

Who can deny that this covetousness which is idolatry, this selfish and grasping spirit, is of all sins that which always has been and is most common and prevalent in the Church, and even among sincerely religious men? It clothes itself with respectability as with a garment, and walks often unrebuked, often flattered even and admired, in almost every assembly of the saints. How many of *us* are there who, if we love righteousness, also hanker after the wages of unrighteousness, after the opulence, the gratifications, the success which can only come to us through a selfish and worldly—*i.e.*, a sinful life. No transgression is more common than this among spiritual men, though none is more fatal to the spiritual life, since none ren-

ders a man more impervious to the rebukes of conscience or the warnings of the Word and Spirit of God. *Cox.*

Thousands of people might be enjoying reasonable lives, with opportunities for self-culture, for social enjoyment, and for charitable effort, whose whole energy is absorbed in the desperate struggle to add superfluities to comforts. *Saturday Review.*—The spirit of enterprise is the mainspring of all material progress and prosperity. The Christian farmer need not be covetous. He cultivates the land that God has prepared for him. He trusts in God for rain and sunshine. And if he raises more than he needs, the surplus feeds the hungry at home and abroad. He cannot be utterly selfish even if he wants to. If he prospers, others must be benefited. And so with the inventor and manufacturer. He may get rich, but he enriches every farmer or artisan who is helped by his labor-saving machine. So in all departments of legitimate business. A man may prosper without covetousness, especially if he regards himself as God's steward, and holds his wealth subject to the calls of religion and humanity. But the man who goes to church on the Sabbath, who professes to believe in God, and then goes home, and in the little shrine of his narrow, selfish soul worships mammon—studies day and night how he can get rich by impoverishing others, he is the heathen in the midst of Christendom. *Babb.*

11-14. The second woe is uttered against drunkenness and heartless dissipation, with its usual accompaniment of inattention to God's providential dealings, and is connected with captivity, hunger, thirst, general mortality, as its appropriate punishment. The description of the sin is contained in verses 11, 12, and first that of drunkenness, considered not as an occasional excess, but as a daily business, diligently prosecuted with a devotion such as would ensure success in any laudable or lawful occupation. A.

The next woe falls on those who abandon themselves to sensuality in the line of strong drink, and luxurious feasting and music, to the utter oblivion of God and of all His claims upon His intelligent and moral offspring. This form of sin and its threatened judgment leads the course of thought through verses 11-17. The description of their sin is strongly drawn. They rise early in the morning to follow strong drink, and are up late in the night inflamed with wine as men who make it their life-work to fire their blood and madden their brain under the perpetual stimulus of intoxicating drink. It is

but a thing of course that such sensualists should give themselves to feasting, and should also superadd the charms of music. And yet more is it a thing of course that they should forget God ! Ah, there can be no right thought or sense of God amid such revelry ! One of the main purposes of such indulgence is to banish all thought of God. H. C.

13, 14. Here again the sin is directly followed by its condign punishment, drunkenness and disregard of providential warnings by captivity, hunger, thirst, and general mortality. But instead of the language of direct prediction (as in verses 9, 10) the prophet here employs that of description. A.

Alcoholic poisoning is responsible for more disease than any other single cause, and its action, being chemical, is more easily investigated than the complicated biologic influences of parasitic micro-organisms. Alcoholic intoxication exhibits in its action phenomena of the same class as present themselves in the case of other chronic poisons. The daily administration of small doses may be continued for an indefinite period without any apparent noxious effect, but its action is cumulative, and may at any moment announce itself as chronic disease. All the indications point to the conclusion that it is the nervous tissue which is especially exposed to the cumulative action of the alcoholic poison. The alcohol sets up a chemical action in the nervous tissue, which at first inaugurates only imperceptible change ; but once inaugurated, the process goes on until the tissue passes into a permanently diseased condition. Hence, medical opinion is becoming more and more strengthened in the conviction that it is by no means only the free drinkers and notorious drunkards who are victims of this insidious habit, but also innumerable persons who would repel the appellation "drinker" with indignation. The influence of alcohol on the nerves, and especially on the motor nerves, is seen in the acute stage of intoxication, and in its chronic form is exhibited in delirium tremens, and various forms of neurotic disease. But, fearful as are these diseases, they are of comparatively rare occurrence, while diseases springing from the action of alcohol on the physical organs are of such far more frequent occurrence as to render their consideration of greater practical importance. Alcohol exerts its essential and most significant influence on the vital organs by being taken up in the circulation, and thus brought into direct contact with the cellular tissues of the vital organs. Cirrhotic liver, diseases of the heart,

of the arteries, of the kidneys, and of the mucous membrane of the alimentary canal, along with gout, diabetes, and fatty degeneration, are all ascribable to it. This is a formidable list when we take into consideration their frequent occurrence. The prevention of the evils of alcoholism, when once realized, should appeal to us as physicians to enlist all our forces in an earnest effort to grapple with them. Prevention is, in principle, so easy. Nothing is needed but insight and good will, and a firm conviction that we are toiling for a good cause in the service of humanity. *Dr. Adolf Strümpell, Berlin.*

14. The ancient Orientals manifestly thought of the souls of men, good or bad, as going to the under world, though not each to the same apartment in it. The grave, just beneath earth's surface, might receive and retain the body ; a lower and quite other one received all human souls, where the wicked wandered in darkness, while the righteous in their apartments had rest. Here this subterranean receptacle opens its mouth even beyond all precedent or limit ; and "down into it go *their* glory" (that of God's guilty people) ; "their multitude and pomp, with every one who exults in it" —*i.e.*, all those who profanely, impiously exult over the threatened horrors of the grave. Making themselves prominent in their foolhardiness, God makes them specially prominent in this enumeration of what goes down into that world of the dead. H. C.

16. God shall be glorified (verse 16). He that is the Lord of hosts and the holy God shall be exalted and sanctified in the judgment and righteousness of these dispensations. His justice must be owned, in bringing those low that exalted themselves ; and herein He is glorified ; He will herein be exalted as the Lord of hosts, that is able to break the strongest, humble the proudest, and tame the most unruly. Power is not exalted but in judgment. It is the honor of God that, though He has a mighty arm, yet *judgment and justice are always the habitation of His throne* (Ps. 89 : 13, 14). H.

18. This verse contains the third woe, having reference to presumptuous sinners who defy God's judgments. They are here represented not as drawn away by sin, but as laboriously drawing it to them by soliciting temptation, drawing it out by obstinate persistency in evil and contempt of Divine threatenings. A. —The cause is here put for the effect ; "iniquity" and "sin" for the punishment which they provoke. The meaning then is, "Woe unto them who foolishly draw upon themselves

the reward of iniquity ; nay, set their shoulders to pull it forward, as a beast of burden does a cart rope !" *Rosenmüller*.

The style of sinning here contemplated is fully given in verse 19, where their spirit stands out in their supposed words : " Let Him" (God) " make speed and hasten His work " (of threatened judgment) " that we may see it — and let the Holy One of Israel " (said contemptuously, in bitter scorn) " draw nigh and come that we may know " (Him). " You threaten His coming : let Him come ! Let us know Him. Who fears ? " This strain of impious blasphemy implies an utter incredulity, or the very extreme of foolhardiness. No human line ever yet fathomed the mysteries of sin madness ; the depths of moral infatuation to which depravity in sinning creatures, human and satanic, can sink. In any rational point of light, it seems in the last degree amazing that men should dare the Almighty to vengeance, and heap insults on His name and throne after this manner ; but who shall say what the folly and guilt of sin cannot do ? Men of this spirit draw all sorts of sin into their souls as if they were eager to be filled with sin to their utmost capacity ! H. C.

20. Woe unto them that call evil good, etc. The prophet compares the difference of moral " good and evil," presented to the human understanding, with that of " light and darkness " discerned by the eye, of " bitter and sweet," tasted by the palate ; that is, as a plain and undeniable truth which forceth its evidence upon a rational mind : to transgress God's commandments, His laws and statutes, delivered by His prophets and confirmed by a series of miracles, was a heinous crime ; but to " call evil good, and good evil," was to advance a step farther in impiety, to lay the profane axe to the root of righteousness, to destroy all religion, and to sink into mere atheism. *Jortin*.—Virtue and piety are good, for they are light and sweet, they are pleasant and right ; but sin and wickedness are evil, they are darkness, all the fruit of ignorance and mistake, and will be bitterness in the latter end. Those do a great deal of wrong to God and religion and conscience, to their own souls and to the souls of others, who misrepresent these and put false colors upon them, who call drunkenness good fellowship and covetousness good husbandry, and when they persecute the people of God think they do Him good service ; and on the other hand, who call seriousness ill nature and sober singularity ill breeding, who say all manner of evil falsely concerning the ways of godliness, and do what

they can to form in men's minds prejudices against them ; and this in defiance of evidence as plain and convincing as that of sense, by which we distinguish beyond contradiction between light and darkness, and that which to the taste is sweet and bitter. H.

This reversal of moral terms and this consequent breaking down of moral distinctions, this calling evil good and good evil, is one of the most common devices of respectable sinning. It is really the testimony which wicked men unconsciously bear to the intrinsic merit and the consequent respectability of goodness. Taxing their sophistry to the utmost, constraining the public sentiment of society to their own purposes, and often, alas ! with fearful success, they manage to lessen materially the discomforts of sinning, and to smooth the matter over to their own consciences. H. C.—Whoever does anything to throw the shield of respectability upon a wrong, or cloak it with a smooth name, or to disguise the hateful expression of its face, does something to undermine the very foundations of the moral structure on which all our safety rests. There is a cowardice, a tameness, a complaisance, often, in our judgments of one another which is only second in mischief to the positive wrong it palliates. It is tampering with the foundation principles of good and evil. *J. H. Allen*.

How much wholesomer on all accounts is it that there should be an ugly word for an ugly thing, one involving moral condemnation and disgust, even at the expense of a little coarseness, rather than one which plays fast and loose with the eternal principles of morality, which makes sin plausible and shifts the divinely reared landmarks of right and wrong, thus bringing the user under the woe of them that call evil good, and good evil ; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness ; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter ; a text on which South has written four of his grandest sermons, with reference to this very matter, and bearing this striking title : " On the Fatal Imposture and Force of Words ! " How awful, yea, how fearful is this force and imposture of theirs, leading men captive at will. There is an atmosphere about them which they are evermore diffusing, an atmosphere of life or death which we insensibly inhale at each moral breath we draw. *Trench*.

There is hope of reformation as long as the principles remain uncorrupted ; but when the light which is in us is converted into darkness, when lies are greedily embraced and errors deliberately justified, the climax of guilt has been

reached, the ruin of the character is complete, and the perdition of the soul, without a stupendous miracle of grace, seems to be inevitable. *Thornwell*.—We hold to no belief in Divine mercy which detracts from the unrelaxed severity of that rule which denounces woe on all those who take pleasure in and who persist in unrighteousness. We can more easily conceive of light without a shadow than believe in sin unaccompanied by penalty. Mercy never lifts her hand to pluck down this high ordinance of God ; but she herself, when she has promised hope and relief, repeats with a new emphasis the retributions which are sure to overtake such as obey not her suggestions. *W. Adams*.

It is nothing but the present torpor of the moral sentiments that allows to material ideas so much power to occupy and overwhelm the mind ; but when the soul shall be quickened from its lethargy, then good and evil will take that seat of influence which has been usurped by unsubstantial images of greatness, beauty, or terror. What are the thunderings of a thousand storms, what the clangor of the trumpet, or the crash of earth, or the universal blaze, what the dazzling front of the celestial array, or even the appalling apparatus of punishment, to the spirit that has become alive to the consciousness of its own moral condition, and is standing naked in the manifested presence of the High and Holy One ? That time of judgment, which is to dispel all disguises and to drag sin from its coverts into the full light of heaven, will assuredly find no moment of leisure for the discursive eye ; one perception, one emotion will doubtless rule exclusive in the soul. *I. Taylor*.—Woe to the soul that fights against God with His own mercies ; that will be sinful because He is merciful. Abused mercy will at last turn into a lion, and then woe to the despisers and abusers of it ! *T. Brooks*.

24. To the series of sins enumerated in the six preceding verses there is now added a general description of their punishment. In the first clause the prophet represents the Divine visitation, with its sudden, rapid, irresistible effect, by the familiar figure of chaff and dry grass sinking in the flames. In the second clause he passes from simile to metaphor, and speaks of the people as a tree whose root is rotten and its growth above ground pulverized.

In the third, he drops both figures for literal expressions.

25. Having declared in the foregoing verse what should be, he recalls to mind what has already been. As if he had said, "God will visit you for these things ; nay, He has done so already, but without reclaiming you or satisfying His own justice, for which purpose further strokes are still required." The previous infictions here referred to are described as a stroke from Jehovah's outstretched hand, so violent as to shake the mountains, and so destructive as to fill the streets with dead bodies. *A.*

26. Here a foreign foe of fearful power appears as the scourge of the nation. How God calls them to this work is indicated by two figures—the lifting up of a banner around which they are to rally and which they follow ; and the hiss or whistle used to call swarming bees home to their hives. With grand sublimity of description, this whistle call is heard from afar across the broad earth, and lo ! they come, very swiftly, to fulfil their mission. Such is the power of Almighty God over even heathen nations who neither know nor fear His name. *H. C.*

30. The roaring of the lion (verse 29) suggests the roaring of the sea, and thus a beautiful transition is effected from the one figure to the other in describing the catastrophe of all these judgments. Israel is threatened by a raging sea, and looking landward sees it growing dark there, until, after a brief fluctuation, the darkness becomes total. *And he (the enemy) shall roar against him (Israel) in that day like the roaring of a sea. And he shall look to the land, and behold darkness ! Anguish and light ! It is dark in the clouds thereof (i.e., of the land, the skies above it).* *A.*—The last touch is graphic. If one looks toward that land, behold ! only darkness and sorrow : dense clouds hang deeply over it : all the great lights are darkened in its heavens ! The pall of death has fallen and enshrouded the land ! So ends this vivid portrayal of the nation's sins and judgments. As to its fulfilment, many points correspond to the captivity by the Chaldeans ; some better to the final destruction by the Romans. Like De. 28, this chapter portrays the fearful judgments held in reserve against the hour when the nation's sins should imperatively demand their infliction, forbearance and further discipline being in vain. *H. C.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTER VI.

6:1 IN the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste, and the LORD have removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land. And if there be yet a tenth in it, it shall again be eaten up: as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stock remaineth, when they are felled; so the holy seed is the stock thereof.

THIS chapter contains a vision and a prophecy of awful import. The prophet sees the Lord enthroned in the Temple and adored by the seraphim, at whose voice the house is shaken, and the prophet, smitten with a sense of his own corruption and unworthiness to speak for God or praise Him, is relieved by the application of fire from the altar to his lips, and an assurance of forgiveness, after which, in answer to the voice of God inquiring for a messenger, he offers himself and is accepted, but with an assurance that his labors will tend only to aggravate the guilt and condemnation of the people, who are threatened with judicial blindness, and, as its necessary consequence, removal from the desolated country; and the prophecy closes with a promise and a threatening both in one—to wit, that the remnant which survives the threatened judgments shall experience a repetition of the stroke, but that a remnant after all shall continue to exist and to experience God's mercy. The chapter naturally falls into two parts, the vision (verses 1-8) and the message or prediction (verses 9-13). A.

The Temple vision has usually been held to describe the first call of Isaiah to his public work. Its date, the last year of Uzziah, is the earliest given. We learn from chap. 1:1 that Isaiah began to prophesy in that reign, and since he survived it full sixty years, its last year is a more probable date for his prophetic

calling than any much earlier year. The first mission of Jeremiah was marked by the touching of his lips in vision, and that of Ezekiel by an appearance of the cherubim. Here both features are combined. The analogy confirms the view that the words recount the first calling of Isaiah; and the question, Whom shall I send? further implies that he was now first set apart as the chosen messenger of God. *Birks.*

It was probably their similarity in subject to the preface in chap. 1 that made Isaiah place the prophecy contained in chaps. 2, 3, 4, and that of the unfruitful vineyard (chap. 5), before the account of his inauguration to his office. Thus far all is general. It is the usual lesson of the preacher—and the prophets were Israel's preachers—Repent: for man is corrupt; but God merciful. But the vision of the Almighty on His throne ushers in one of the most remarkable of all Isaiah's predictions—that contained in chaps. 7, 8, and 9:1-7; and the importance of this prophecy was apparently the reason why Isaiah placed in front of it his own solemn call. R. P. S.

We find fully revealed, in this interview between the Eternal and His prophet, the three great ideas which were the sustaining powers of his ministry of sixty years. The first, God is holy, therefore His people Israel must be holy. Holiness is to be the unchangeable law of their national existence: "Holy, holy, holy,"

cry one to another, with subdued voice, the seraphim standing before the throne. And the sanctuary is shaken. Isaiah catches a sudden glimpse, terrible in its clearness, of his own and his people's sin; he feels himself, as it were, struck dead at the sight. Hence the second thought: the nation is already too far gone in sin to be able to accept in earnest the appeals for reform addressed to them by the prophet on behalf of God. "They hear indeed, but do not understand." In order to purify *this people*, whom God has already ceased to call *My people*, words are not sufficient; there must be a great *national chastisement*. "Lord, how long?" asks the prophet. "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate," is the Lord's answer. But is that to be the end of the prophetic vision? No; and here is the third thought: as the metal comes forth from the crucible, reduced in size but purified, so, after the judgment which shall fall twice upon the people, there shall remain a *holy remnant*, the germ of the true people of God. "In it shall be a tenth, and it shall return and shall be eaten; as a teil tree, and as an oak whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves, so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof." Thus, *holiness* as the law, *chastisement* as the means, and the *holy remnant* as the result; these are the three fundamental thoughts of this Divine dialogue, the foundation of the whole ministry of Isaiah. They sum up, if I may so say, the whole religious philosophy of the prophet; a philosophy evidently superior to mere human wisdom, and descending from that same Sinai whence came forth the law. *Godet*.

1-4. The prophet is represented as standing without and immediately before the Holy Place, near the great altar of burnt offering. The doors of entrance to the Holy Place and the veil separating it from the Holy of Holies were thrown wide open, so that the whole inner sanctuary was disclosed to his view. But now its mysterious symbols seemed to be transformed into glorious realities. The Holy of Holies appeared to him as the heaven of heavens. In place of the golden-burnished mercy-seat he saw a throne high and lifted up, of unutterable magnificence. Instead of the resplendent shekinah, the visible symbol of Jehovah, he beheld Jehovah Himself apparently in human form sitting in awfully refulgent majesty upon the throne, clad, after the manner of an ancient monarch, in a robe, the radiant folds of whose flowing train swept over and covered the pavement of the sanctuary. Surrounding this

throned Glorious One, instead of the shining cherubim were seen flaming seraphim as His attendant ministers in the attitude of profound veneration, reverently engaged in His worship. These most exalted of created beings severally with two of their wings covered their faces, and with two their feet, thereby betokening their inability steadfastly to behold the glory of God, and the reverence and awe with which they were inspired by His immediate presence, while with the remaining two they were prepared to fly in quick, eager readiness to obey His will. And as thus they stood, with ardent devotion they hymned one to another in alternative responsive doxology, "Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts; filled is all the earth with His glory!" Then were the bases of the thresholds shaken with their loud acclaim, while the whole sacred edifice, suffused with the altar smoke, trembled with the immediate manifest presence of Jehovah. *B.*

1. I saw the Lord. It has been a general opinion in all ages of the Church that in every such manifestation it was God the Son who thus revealed Himself. In John 12:41 it is said to have been Christ's glory that Isaiah saw and spoke of, while Paul cites verses 9 and 10 (Acts 28:25, 26) as the language of the Holy Ghost. *A.*

2. "Each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet;" this is the seraph's life of devotion. "And with twain he did fly;" this is his life of active service. If, then, God's will is to be done by His people on earth as it is by His angels in heaven, there must enter into the spiritual life upon earth two great elements—devotion toward God and work for God. The ministry of angels is only half their life. The other half, which indeed makes their ministry glow with zeal, is their worship. And so it must be with God's human servants. Our flying on God's errands will be an unhallowed flight, if we do not first secretly adore Him in our hearts. A prayerless day of hard work, consecrated by no holy meditation, what a dull, plodding, tramping day is it! *E. M. G.*

3. Two of the Divine attributes form the theme of the seraphs' hymn: God's holiness as inherent in Himself, His glory as manifested in the earth. Holiness denotes fundamentally a state of freedom from all imperfection; a state, moreover, realized with such intensity as to imply not only the absence of evil, but antagonism to it. It is more than goodness, more than purity, more than righteousness; it embraces all these in their ideal completeness, but

it expresses besides the recoil from everything which is their opposite. This is the sense which the word bears throughout Scripture. *Driver.*

The seraphim sing responsively to God, as thrice holy, supremely holy, and persevere without weariness in their adoration. But the words allude further to the three persons of the Godhead (John 17 : 11 ; Heb. 7 : 26 ; 1 John 2 : 20) and to the sacred name, including past, present, future time, as in their apocalyptic song, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4 : 8). *Birks.*

—The allusion to the Trinity is the more probable because different parts of the chapter are referred in the New Testament to the three persons of the Godhead. A.—In this trisagion, this thrice-repeated "holy," we have no more than a glimpse of the mystery. Yet it was a precious confirmation of the faith, when in a later day this mystery was fully made known, to discover that the rudiments of it had been laid long before in Scripture ; that first and last were there bound together the full unfolded flower of the New Testament shut up in the bud and blossom of the Old. *Trench.*

The doctrine of the Trinity rests upon the sure testimony of the Word of God, and is itself the primal foundation of the great facts of Christianity—atonement for sin by Divine sacrifice, and regeneration of the soul by Divine influence. Only a Divine Saviour could make atonement for sin ; only a Divine Spirit can give life to the soul dead in trespasses and sins. Hence the doctrines of atonement and regeneration rest upon the doctrine of the Trinity, and stand or fall with it. It is a doctrine of the New Testament more than of the Old. Nevertheless, it did not appear in the Christian Church as something altogether new, but by that law of development by which what is concealed in the Old Testament is laid open in the New. It pleases God by means of historic facts to communicate His eternal truth to the world. The doctrines of Scripture are given us mostly by historic mediation, and the facts of the Divine plan of redemption were essential to the full revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity, and the proper use of it for life and salvation. Still, there are numerous and clear intimations of this mystery in the Old Testament, and evident preparations for the revelation of it. Divine attributes are ascribed to the coming Messiah (Isa. 9 : 6 ; Jer. 23 : 6 ; 33 : 16 ; Micah 5 : 2) ; also frequent mention of the Spirit of God (Gen. 6 : 3 ; Ex. 31 : 3 ; 1 Sam. 16 : 13 ; Isa. 61 : 1 ; 63 : 10 ; 48 : 16). These passages, taken together, contain the Trinity germinantly. *Robie.*

The Trinity of our faith means a distinction of persons within one common, indivisible Divine nature. It implies, therefore, as its base that the Divine nature is one and indivisible. It excludes the notion of lords many and gods many. For this reason God revealed the essential oneness of His being first ; and it was only after Israel had, through many weary centuries and many bitter lessons, learned that truth, that Jesus did or could disclose to His disciples the "name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And when you see at the same time how such Hebrews as John, Paul and Peter came to revere Jesus the Son of God as equally to be worshipped with the Father, and received the invisible Spirit who came at Pentecost as no less truly a Divine person, you must feel that this new revelation of a Trinity in God left quite unaltered their old faith that God is one. It was a mighty and a blessed addition to their knowledge of Jehovah ; but it did not shake what they knew before—"Hear, O Israel : Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." *Dykes.*

He who goes about to speak of the mystery of the Trinity, and does it by words and names of man's invention, talking of essences and existences, hypostases and personalities, may build a tabernacle in his head, and talk something he knows not what ; but the renewed man that feels the power of the Father, and to whom the Son has become wisdom, sanctification and redemption, in whose heart the love of the Spirit of God is shed abroad—this man, though he understands nothing of what is unintelligible, yet he alone truly understands the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. *Jeremy Taylor.*

The doctrine of the Trinity is not a mere speculative mystery. Each of the Divine persons has His office in the economy of redemption, and this gives us an idea of the grandeur and dignity of that redemption, in the economy of which there is such a co-operation ; the Father devising it, the Son executing, the Spirit applying. And the persons are distinctly named in the New Testament, probably that we may be able the more clearly to trace the plan. . . . Could the whole theory of the Incarnation be laid open to our view, no additional force would be given to those motives to fervent gratitude and devotedness to the service of our Redeemer which the mere fact is adapted to inspire. The practical influence is not at all impaired, but rather heightened, by the speculative difficulties which attend it, because they result merely from its ineffable grandeur. The same may be said with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity. The distinct parts assigned to the three Divine per-

sons exhibit the beautiful harmony of the plan of redemption: the Father sending His Son, the Son executing His Father's will, the Holy Spirit sanctifying the people of God by dwelling in their hearts. These truths are not less practical because of the mystery which attends the doctrine. We are as able to adore the grace of the Father, the love of the Son, the communion of the Holy Spirit—to value the distinct agency of the several persons in the work of our salvation, as if we could perceive the theory of this unspeakable mystery. *R. Hall.*

Thus the doctrine of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost satisfies the deepest wants of the soul. Never so much as in prayer do we feel our need of the presence and aid of the Holy Spirit; never so much as in prayer do we see the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in His mediation with the Father. The doctrine is essential to Christian life and worship. It is the one faith in which we are baptized, and in which we are blessed. And the whole Church is one, now and forever, in the unity of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Robie.*

To eye God in all our comforts, and observe the smiling aspects of His face when He dispenses them to us; to eye Him in all our afflictions, and consider the paternal wisdom that instructs us in them—how would this increase our mercies and mitigate our troubles! To eye Him in all His creatures, and observe the various prints of the Creator's glory stamped upon them—with how lively a lustre would it clothe the world, and make everything look with a pleasant face! What a heaven were it to look upon God, as filling all in all; and how sweetly would it, erewhile, raise our souls into some such sweet seraphic strains, "Holy, holy, holy—the whole earth is full of His glory." To eye Him in His providences, and consider how all events are with infinite wisdom disposed into an apt subserviency to His holy will and ends—what difficulties would hence be solved! what seeming inconsistencies reconciled! and how much would it contribute to the ease and quiet of our minds! To eye Him in His Christ, the express image of His person, the brightness of His glory, and in the Christian economy, the Gospel revelation and ordinances, through which He manifests Himself; to behold Him in the posture wherein He saves souls, clad with the garments of salvation, girt with power, and apparelled with love, travelling in the greatness of His strength, mighty to save; to view Him addressing Himself to allure and win to Him

the hearts of sinners, when He discovers Himself in Christ, upon that reconciling design, makes grace that brings salvation appear; to behold Him entering into human flesh, pitching His tabernacle among men, hanging out His ensigns of peace, laying His trains, spreading His net, the cords of a man, the bands of love; to see Him in His Christ ascending the cross, lifted up to draw all men to Him; and consider that mighty love of justice and of souls, both so eminently conspicuous in that stupendous sacrifice; here to fix our eyes looking to Jesus, and behold in Him, Him whom we have pierced; to see His power and glory as they were wont to be seen in His sanctuaries; to observe Him in the solemnities of His worship, wherein He holds communion with His saints when He seats Himself amid them on the throne of grace, receives their addresses, dispenses the tokens and pledges of His love—into what transports might these visions put us every day! *Howe.*

The whole earth is full of His glory.

This prophecy of the far-spreading glory of the Messiah's reign, considered as coming from the lips of the seraphim, those burning messengers from before the heavenly throne, has exquisite beauty, sublimity and force. It opens the vista of Messiah's future kingdom as seen with their eye and from their point of view. No wonder such a theme should touch their lips with hallowed fire, and enkindle the utmost ardor of their souls! *H. C.*

4. In the dedication by Solomon the song of praise was the signal for the cloud of glory to fill the house, and so also in the Apocalypse. As fire from heaven was the sign of His acceptance of earthly sacrifice, so here this cloud, "dark with excessive bright," is the sublime response to the worship of the seraphim. What nobler answer could be given to their adoration than fresh tokens of the unsearchableness of His glory? *Birks.*

5-8. We have here the very same elements upon which the inner life of every Christian rests: the holiness of God, the sin of man, the Divine reconciliation. Every Christian feels himself related to Isaiah when he is conscious that the majesty of the holy God brings death to the sinner, and that only after being pardoned he can be an instrument of service in the hands of God; and when, after receiving the atonement, he gives himself gladly and freely to the service of God. There is thus nothing here that is foreign or dark to us. *Auberlen.*

5. **Then said I, Woe is me.** He is not lifted up that he should be honored with such

■ vision of God ; but, on the contrary, struck with humble, holy fear—*I am undone!* This is much of the exercise of souls admitted nearest to God, even this astonishment and admiration that such as they should be regarded and raised to that height and holy fear in a sense of their unholiness. *Leighton.*

It is not of the inferiority of the human mind and of the cloudless height and power of the Divine mind that Isaiah is here led to think, but of his own sinfulness and of God's holiness. The moral humility ever goes lower than the intellectual. A sense of sin brings us down more than a sense of ignorance. . . . Isaiah hears the angelic antiphone, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;" and the pureness, and truth, and equity, and justice, and love, and faithfulness of God, thus expanded and revolved before the prophet's thoughts, lead him to ponder, on the principle of contrast, his own ways, and his own heart, and he exclaims, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." *Stoughton.*

—The sense of sin continued and increased in power through the whole of Paul's Christian life. It wrung out from his soul the threefold expression, ever increasing in intensity: "I am not worthy to be called an apostle;" "I am less than the least of all saints;" "I am the chief of sinners." The last of the three is the climax and consummation of all. It goes deeper than his apostolic office, deeper than his church-membership, into the very roots of his character, and into his personal relationship as a sinner to Christ. He never counted himself to have attained the end of his calling; he never thought himself perfect; he was always burdened with a body of sin and death, from which, till the end of life, he longed to be delivered. It was this increasing sense of his own unworthiness that made the sufficient grace of Christ so sweet and precious to him, filled his preaching with the essence of the Gospel, and fired it with an unquenchable zeal. *Anon.*

The King, the Lord of hosts. The same Spirit which displayed this glorious vision to Isaiah has given the interpretation of it by the Evangelist John. John tells us that Christ was that Jehovah whom the entranced prophet saw upon His throne; whose train filled the temple; whose praises were the theme of the seraphic song; whose glory fills the universe. According to the evangelist, it was Christ's glory that Esaias saw; and to Him whose glory he saw the prophet gives the name

of Jehovah, and the worshipping angels gave the name of Jehovah God of Sabaoth. *Bp. Horsley.*

6, 7. It was part of the same fire, which consumed the sacrifices, whereby the prophet's lips were purged in the vision for the fulfilment of his high calling. His own place, in vision, was without in the altar court. The mention of the tongs is a further sign. The atonement was made by the sacrifices on the altar of burnt offering. The act of the seraph denoted the pardon of sin, because the wood was from this altar, where the blood of the sin-offerings was poured out. But it also implied the conveyance of prophetic inspiration, since his lips were now consecrated to God's service with heavenly fire. *Birks.*—God touched his lips with a coal from the altar, and purified and consecrated him to bear His message, and then He told him that the people would not hear nor understand him. That anointed prophet, the grandest spirit that ever touched the strings of the prophetic harp, should preach to dull ears and to hard hearts. None the less was he to sow the truth of which the reaping would come by and by. He was to draw his inspiration from God, not from success. *C. J. Vaughan.*

7, 8. This *fire* hath two effects: it works purity and activity, it takes away sin and puts in spirit and life for obedience; and so here *thy sin is purged*; and then, says he, *Here am I; send me*; and the former is effectual toward the latter; the more the soul is cleansed, the more alive and able it is made for service. A soul well cleansed from the love of sin, and the world, and self, is in a healthful temper, and goes nimbly to any work; outward discouragements and difficulties are then nothing. Other motives, or the mixtures of them, God may make use of sometimes, yet He sees within and knows what spring makes the wheels go, and He gives them their reward here, somewhat possibly of that they seek (success and credit and a name), but the after reward of faithful servants they need not look for in that work; for they receive their reward, and can they expect more? Many an *Here am I* comes from other incentives than an *altar coal*; and so they may burn and shine awhile, but they soon consume and die out in a snuff; the heavenly altar fire alone keeps in and returns to heaven, where it was kindled. This, then, is to be sought for by all that offer any service to God, a readiness from love. *Leighton.*

8. Jerome's explanation of the plural, as implying a plurality of persons in the speaker, is approved by Calvin. This explanation is the

only one that accounts for the difference of number in the verb and pronoun—"whom *shall I send*, and who will go *for us*?" A.—"I" in the first form of the question becomes "*us*" in the second. There should be some good ground for this close relationship. None has ever been assigned; it is safe to say that none can be more plausible and probable than that which assumes a reference to the trinity of persons in the one God. This view has the endorsement of both John and Paul. H. C.

The Lord of hosts was communing with His child. The solemn voice was unmistakable, "Whom shall I send to save them?" He bowed himself in the dust and cried, "Send me." Through the long half century of his ministry that hour of his self-consecration seemed never to pass away. For the thought of Jehovah's presence in that sanctuary was ever the material stay on which he leaned for rest when his spirit was worn and weary. That hour's penetrating gaze into the things of God and of men was but the entrance on a life of constant watching and study. The same sense of Divine communion was ever the spring of his great confidence as he preached. A. Duff.

Whom shall I send, and who will go? The double form of the question means that God's commission is offered for the acceptance of hearts that are smitten by His love, and that He calls for volunteers, not for pressed men. God's commission is to every one of us. God's voice sounds to me by the very possession of His truth and by all the faculties that I have for the communicating of it; if I have got it, and if I can do anything to spread it, there is the obligation. Most of all, if I have Christ for my Saviour, that makes it a crime in me if I do not carry Him, somehow, to other people. A. M.

Every impulse and stroke of missionary power on earth is from the heart of Christ. If there are activity, free giving, ready going, a full treasury, able men who say, "Here am I, send me," it is because through all the organization Christ lives and His personal Spirit works. There is no other possible spring for that enthusiasm. F. D. H.

Every man has his proper gift of God—every man, be he ever so humble, ever so retired and relatively insignificant. We shall find our special gift when we are willing to see it in God's light, when, with the simplicity of a child, we are ready to say, "What am I, and what wilt Thou have me to do?" God knows our gift and He wishes that we should know it, and He will lead us into the knowledge of it when

we are willing to use it, not for present ease of advancement, but for His glory and the good of others. J. Drummond.

9, 10. Though his lips have been touched with fire from God's altar, he is not to expect the general repentance of the people. His burning words would kindle no worthy response in their hearts. They would hear, constantly and repeatedly, and not understand. They would see his warnings fulfilling themselves before their eyes, and be blind to that fulfilment. With stern irony they are told to persevere in this deafness and blindness. In the same way the prophet is taught what would be the direct result of his own labors. His words would leave the people, in general, more hardened; yet knowing this, he was to teach them and to warn them still. The foreseen abuse of God's messages is not always a reason why they should be withheld. Even the Gospel itself is "unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish." And though God, who cannot be tempted of evil, Himself tempts no man, yet the perverseness of the ungodly can never disappoint His counsel; and their foreseen guilt and folly will minister at length to the brighter display of His infinite holiness, and perfect love. Birks.

9, 10. These verses are referred to in at least six passages in the New Testament (Matt. 13:14; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:26; Rom. 11:8). Our Lord's use of it in Matthew, Mark and Luke was entirely in harmony with its drift and purpose as it stands here in Isaiah—*i.e.*, illustrative of that judicial blindness to which God leaves sinners who resist His Spirit and set at naught His merciful endeavors to enlighten and save them. The phraseology of Matthew (13:14) and of Paul (Acts 28:26) is slightly modified from that of Isaiah. It is not, "Shut thou their eyes," but "their eyes *have they* closed." This change makes God's permissive and judicial agency less prominent, and the sinner's own voluntary agency more prominent. The latter agency Isaiah most fully and surely implies, and the former, neither Matthew nor Paul would exclude. It should be noted that these apostles, Matthew and Paul, quote from the Septuagint, which reads, "The heart of this people has become gross; with their ears they hear heavily" (in dulness) "and their eyes have they shut lest they should see with their eyes," etc. This is entirely correct in sentiment, yet does not bring out in its full strength the Divine agencies in withdrawing His Spirit and

giving up self-hardened sinners in judgment to their own free and guilty choice of rebellion and death. It puts this guilty choice and this persistent refusal of the sinner in the foreground as facts never to be ignored. And rightly. The endorsement of this view by our Lord, as in Matthew (13:14), and by Paul (Acts 28:26) may be taken as a timely suggestion and caution against overstraining the Divine agency in the judicial hardening of the persistent sinner. It would be ineffably revolting to give it such a construction as would ignore God's love and pity for even the guiltiest sinner, or His sincere and earnest desire that they would, any and all, turn from their sins and live. H. C.

The system of this world depends, in a way unknown to us, both on God's providence and on human agency. Every event, every course of action has two faces; it is Divine and perfect, and it belongs to man and is marked with his sin. And it is a peculiarity of Holy Scripture to represent the world on its providential side; ascribing all that happens in it to Him who rules and directs it as it moves along, tracing events to His sole agency or viewing them only so far forth as He acts in them. Thus He is said to harden Pharaoh's heart, and to hinder the Jews from believing in Christ; whereby is signified His absolute sovereignty over all human affairs and courses. *Newman.*

It is ever so, and ever must be. There are shut souls, that having eyes will not see, and having ears will not hear, though the vision be open, and the voice as the voice of many waters, and of a great thunder, and of harpers harping with their harps. None the less do the Eternal Truth and the Eternal Way stand fast and offer themselves in mercy inexhaustible to the needy heart of "whosoever will." . . . Glories of heaven and earth, grander than telescopes ever pierced among the stars, or hammers ever uncovered in the rocks, pass by, and there is no vision to behold them. Quick minds, but dull affections! Full understandings and empty hearts! Spiritual things not seen for want of spiritual senses! "O fools and slow of heart to believe" all that God's prophets, God's angels, God's Scriptures have spoken! F. D. H.

There is a way of blindness by hardening the heart. Let us not conceal this truth from ourselves. God blinds the eye, but it is in the appointed course of His providential dealings. If a man *will not see*, the law is he *shall not see*; if he will not *do what is right* when he knows the right, then right shall become to him wrong, and wrong shall seem to be right. F. W. R.

—God, who punishes sin with death, sometimes punishes sin with sin. At a certain stage in the sinner's dreary downward course the Lord hardens his heart. God is not responsible for his sin; but when he has repelled the voice of conscience, and the warning of his Bible, and the entreaties of friends, then grace is withdrawn from him, and sin puts on a judicial character, and is at once sin and punishment. *Abp. Thomson.*

The process of heart-hardening is no mystery, no miracle enacted by Almighty power, but a natural process begun, carried on, and completed by the sinner himself and the sinner alone. And it is a *continuous process*. No soul ever reached at once that state of immovable feeling, of active opposition to God which is called a hardened heart. It is, in accordance with the law of the spiritual nature, produced simply by *repeated* neglect of those passive impressions made upon the heart by the influences of God's truth and Spirit. B.

11, 12. The prophet's words are no mere curious inquiry, but a sorrowful complaint. So Jer. 12:4, "How long shall the land mourn for the wickedness of them that dwell therein?" And the beloved Daniel, "How long shall be the vision of the transgression of desolation?" (Dan. 8:13)? And the souls under the altar, "How long, O Lord, faithful and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" It is the longing of the faithful, in every age, to look beyond the dark clouds of sin and sorrow to the close of the mystery of God, the times of restitution of all things, and to the full victory of redeeming power and love. The answer declares how complete the judgment will be. Not the cities only, but their separate houses; not only the town, but the country, will be dispeopled. They shall be exiled, not to near districts, whence they might soon return, but far away; and there would be a long-lasting desolation. The warning plainly extends beyond the nearer Assyrian troubles to the captivity of Babylon. And as the reproof was applied anew by Paul to the Jews at Rome, so the words have been fulfilled, even more strikingly, in the wars of Vespasian and Titus, and the dispersion and desolation which lasts even to the present time. So wide in their range are His messages, with whom a thousand years are as a single day. *Birks.*

The cities are "without inhabitant," the houses are "without man," the land is "utterly desolate," judgment *has* come upon it all, far and near; in a word, *the whole of Bashan and*

Moab is one great fulfilled prophecy. The noble plain of Bashan is thickly studded with cities, towns and villages, intersected with roads, having one of the finest climates of the world ; yet is the whole region utterly deserted, literally "without man and without beast" (Isa. 33 : 10). *J. L. Porter* ("*Giant Cities of Bashan*").

13. The chapter closes with a repetition and extension of the threatening, but in such a form as to involve a promise of the highest import. While it is threatened that the stroke shall be repeated on the remnant that survives its first infliction, it is promised that there shall be such a remnant after every repetition to the last. However frequently the people may seem to be destroyed, there shall still be a surviving remnant, and however frequently that very remnant may appear to perish, there shall still be a remnant of the remnant left, and this indestructible residuum shall be the holy seed, the true Church (Rom. 11 : 5). This prediction was fulfilled, not once for all, but again and again ; not only in the vine-dressers and husbandmen left by Nebuchadnezzar and afterward destroyed in Egypt ; not only in the remnant that survived the destruction of the city by the Romans, and increased until again destroyed by Adrian ; but in the present existence of the Jews as a peculiar people, notwithstanding the temptations to amalgamate with others, notwithstanding persecutions and apparent extirpations ; a fact which can only be explained by the prediction that "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11 : 26). As in many former instances throughout the history of the chosen people, under both dispensations, "even so, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace." *A.*

The two most common forest trees of Palestine were the terebinth and oak. They were strong, hardy trees. It was a matter of difficulty so to cut and maim them as to take the substance or vitality out of them. So long as the trunk or stem was allowed to remain in the soil, they were sure, in course of time, to grow and flourish anew ; and Isaiah was taught by God Himself that His people would be equally tenacious of life. Period after period there would be a tenth—a remnant, however diminutive, as many as would, by the blessing of heaven, once more develop into a prosperous nation. Sooner or later the judgments of God would have the desired effect, and the tree that had been hurt and peeled would give indications that it had not been deprived of all its substance or vitality. *C. Cron.*

So holy seed shall be the substance of the human race. They are that part of it which remains living when the generations fall and decay like the leaves from an oak. For the growth and development of the tree the seasons have been made what they are. Indeed, the whole meaning of the season is this—it is God's contrivance to get living, growing, fruitful trees. And the whole meaning of all the seasons of time and history is this—it is a plan of God to get a holy seed, a tree of life, a peculiar people. When the seasons are all past, when the generations have all lived and died, and the true substance of the human remains as the substance of the oak when it casts its leaves, then will there be on the banks of the river of the water of life, in the new heavens and the new earth, a tree of life whose leaf shall not wither and whose fruit shall be yielded every month. *W. R. Brooks.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTER VII.

- 7 : 1** AND it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to war against it ; but could not prevail against it. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest are moved with the wind.
- 3** Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, in the high way of the fuller's field ; and say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet ; fear not, neither let thine heart be faint, because of these two tails of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and of the son of Remaliah. Because Syria hath counselled evil against thee, Ephraim *also*, and the son of
- 6** Remaliah, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein

- 7 for us, and set up a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeel : thus saith the Lord God,
 8 It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the
 head of Damascus is Rezin : and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken in
 9 pieces, that it be not a people : and the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria
 is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.
 10, 11 And the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God ; ask
 12 it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I
 13 tempt the Lord. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David ; is it a small thing for you
 14 to weary men, that ye will weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you
 a sign ; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,
 15 (God is with us.) Butter and honey shall he eat, when he knoweth to refuse the evil, and
 16 choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the
 17 land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken. The Lord shall bring upon thee,
 and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day
 that Ephraim departed from Judah ; *even* the king of Assyria.
 18 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall hiss for the fly that is in the
 19 uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. And
 they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the
 rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all pastures.
 20 In that day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, *which is* in the parts beyond the
 River, *even* with the king of Assyria, the head and the hair of the feet : and it shall also con-
 sume the beard.
 21 And it shall come to pass in that day, that a man shall nourish a young cow, and two
 22 sheep ; and it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk that they shall give he shall eat
 butter : for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the midst of the land.
 23 And it shall come to pass in that day, that every place, where there were a thousand vines
 24 at a thousand silverlings, shall even be for briers and thorns. With arrows and with bow
 25 shall one come thither ; because all the land shall be briers and thorns. And all the hills that
 were digged with the mattock, thou shalt not come thither for fear of briers and thorns, but
 it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of sheep.

HERE begins a series of connected prophecies (chaps. 7-12), belonging to the reign of Ahaz, and relating in general to the same great subjects, the deliverance of Judah from Syria and Israel, its subsequent subjection to Assyria and other foreign powers, the final destruction of its enemies, the advent of Messiah and the nature of His kingdom. This series admits of different divisions, but it is commonly agreed that one distinct portion is contained in the seventh chapter. The chapter begins with a brief historical statement of the invasion of Judah by Rezin and Pekah, and of the fear which it excited, to relieve which Isaiah is commissioned to meet Ahaz in a public place, and to assure him that there is nothing more to fear from the invading powers, that their evil design cannot be accomplished, that one of them is soon to perish, and that in the mean time both are to remain without enlargement (verses 1-9). Seeing the king to be incredulous, the prophet invites him to assure himself by choosing any sign or pledge of the event, which he refuses to do under the pretext of confidence in God, but is charged with unbelief by the prophet, who nevertheless renews the promise of deliv-

erance in a symbolical form, and in connection with a prophecy of the miraculous conception and nativity of Christ, both as a pledge of the event and as a measure of the time in which it is to take place (verses 10-16). To this assurance of immediate deliverance he adds a threatening of ulterior evils, to arise from the Assyrian protection which the king preferred to that of God—to wit, the loss of independence, the successive domination of foreign powers, the harassing and predatory occupation of the land by strangers, the removal of its people, the neglect of tillage, and the transformation of its choicest vineyards, fields and gardens into wastes or pastures (verses 17-25). A.

1. The prophet Isaiah had his commission renewed in the year that King Uzziah died (chap. 6:1). Jotham his son reigned, and reigned well, sixteen years ; all that time, no doubt, Isaiah prophesied as he was commanded, and yet we have not in this book any of his prophecies dated in the reign of Jotham ; but this which is put first was in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham. H.

Rezin, the king of Damascene Syria or Aram, appears to have formed an alliance with Pekah,

the murderer and successor of Pekahiah, king of Israel (2 K. 15:27), during the reign of Jotham (verse 37), but to have deferred the actual invasion of Judah until that king's death and the accession of his feeble son, in the first year of whose reign it probably took place, with most encouraging success, as the army of Ahaz was entirely destroyed, and two hundred thousand persons taken captive, who were afterward sent back at the instance of the prophet Oded (2 Chron. 28:5-15). But notwithstanding this success, they were unable to effect their main design, the conquest of Jerusalem, whether repelled by the natural strength and artificial defences of the place itself or interrupted in the siege by the actual or dreaded invasion of their own dominions by the king of Assyria (2 K. 16:7-9). It seems to be at a point of time between their first successes and their final retreat that the prophet's narrative begins. A.

The history of Ahaz may be seen in 2 K. 16 and 2 Chron. 28. Suffice it to say of him here that the sacred record shows him to have been intensely wicked; more radically apostate from God than any Jewish king before him; more propense to idol-worship, and more reckless of God and of the dictates of common humanity. It seems that very early in his reign the Syrians made war upon him; defeated his army with immense slaughter, and took many captives; also that Pekah, king of Israel (here called Ephraim), prevailed against him; "slew one hundred and twenty thousand men in one day, all valiant men, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers," and took two hundred thousand captives. All these, at the instance of the prophet Oded, were restored to their homes. It appears, however, both from 2 K. 16:5 and from the statements here that these hostile kingdoms, even combined, were not able to take Jerusalem. Still those allies were a formidable power, and their approach at this time gave the court of Ahaz and the inhabitants of Jerusalem occasion for serious fear. H. C.

2. Syria, the constant foe of the house of David, had regained its former influence. The professed aim of the renewed confederacy was not bloody war, but a friendly revolution to remove an unpopular king. Their real aim was to make Judah a vassal of Syria and Ephraim. There was thus great cause for dismay. The people feared the renewal of former bloodshed, and the house of David were aware of deep discontent among the people. Faith alone could have made them bold, and this faith was wholly wanting. *Birks.*

3-16. Accompanied by his elder son, Isaiah meets the idolatrous king, assures him of deliverance, and offers him a sign in proof thereof. But Ahaz had cast off his allegiance to Jehovah, and with a certain show of consistency will accept no sign from a Deity whom he no longer serves. But Judah is still Jehovah's people, and He grants them the sign rejected by the royal house. The word "sign" is our word "miracle." In John's Gospel the word rendered "miracle" in our version is constantly in the Greek "sign;" and thus what Isaiah offered was a miracle—that is, a sign of God's presence, not in the ordinary workings of nature, but in some special and supernatural way. Ahaz will have no miracle; Isaiah gives him the miracle of the virgin's child, the Immanuel. A mere ordinary event is not in biblical language a sign. Yet this sign has an ordinary side to it. As far as Ahaz and unbelievers generally were concerned, there was nothing more than a plain promise, though couched in an obscure form, that within about two years all danger from the confederacy would have passed away. R. P. S.

3. The two sons of Isaiah had the same character of "signs from the Lord" (8:18). The name of the younger was given by express command (8:1-4), and announced the speedy advent of the Assyrian spoiler. Of Shear-jashub no such details are given.

6. Tabeal. The view of Calvin seems to agree better with the context, that he was the head of the disaffected party in Judah. By promoting a Jewish noble or popular favorite, the confederates would be most likely to secure their object of making Judah a vassal and dependent power. The presence of a stranger, a Syrian noble, would have been a constant motive for revolt, and sign of degradation. *Birks.*

8, 9. Their plans shall not succeed, for Damascus shall continue to be the capital of Syria, and of nothing more; Rezin shall be the headman, the king, of Damascus and not of Jerusalem besides; and within sixty-five years shall Ephraim be so completely crushed as to be no people. And not only so, but up to that time (sixty-five years hence) Samaria shall be the capital of Ephraim only, not of Ephraim and of Judah both. Ye need therefore have no fear of the partition of Judah between these foreign powers, or of her being attached as a tributary to either of them. H. C.

9. If ye will not believe, surely ye will not be established. Their unbelief was the true source of their confusion and sor-

row. *Birks.*—The requirement of faith runs through the entire Old Testament. The leading of Israel, from the time of its deliverance out of Egypt (Ex. 4 : 31; 14 : 31, cf. especially De. 1 : 32; 9 : 23, and many other passages), rests entirely on faith. But in proportion as its Divine election seemed to human apprehension thwarted, and the promise of redemption forfeited, by the apostasy of the nation and the judgments thereby incurred, the more emphatically is it asserted how all-important *faith* was, as the root of all righteousness, and the condition on which the blessing was to be obtained. "If ye do not believe, truly ye shall not remain"—i.e., be in a firm and stable condition—is the word of the prophet to Ahaz when he sought help from Assyria. *What then is this faith?* *Negatively speaking, it is a ceasing from all natural confidence in one's own strength and power, a renunciation of all trust in human support and assistance.* Accordingly Jeremiah thus describes unbelief (17 : 5), "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm" (which was just what Ahaz had done). *Positively, it is a fastening or leaning; for this is the proper meaning of the word, namely, a fastening of the heart upon the Divine word of promise, a leaning upon the power and faithfulness of God,* by reason of which He can and will effect what He chooses in spite of all earthly obstacles. On its negative side, whereby faith renounces self-chosen human ways, it is a resting in, a quiet waiting for God. *Oehler.*

10-15. The previous verses are the historical preface to this wonderful prophecy. The sign offered was to be a pledge of God's enduring favor to the house of David, now threatened at home and abroad, by the disaffected in Judah, and by the confederate kings. The title "thy God" reminds Ahaz of the sure covenant of David, on which he was bound to rest.

11. The answer of Ahaz alludes to De. 6 : 16. He wrests the command of God into an excuse for rejecting God's own offer. He did not wish to be bound to God's service by any fresh tie, and clung to his scheme of hiring the king of Assyria. *Birks.*

14. The Lord shall give you a sign, behold a virgin, etc. The main object of this sign of unusual dignity was, in the hour of alarm and terror, to renew the confidence of the faithful in God's double covenant to Abraham and to David, of One who should possess the gate of His enemies, and of that Son of David who should rise up to sit on His throne, of whose kingdom there should be no end. The purpose of the hostile league was wholly to dis-

place the sacred line, and to set up the son of Tabeal (verse 6), a stranger or a renegade, on David's throne. The promise, then, to the house of David of the greater Son of David, whose birth would be a miracle of Divine power, the Owner of the land (8 : 8-10), and the Redeemer of His people from their enemies, is confirmed with greater fulness and clearness than before. But a special warning, due to the present sin of Ahaz and his people, is here joined with the promise. Not only the present invasion, which would very soon be at an end, but heavier troubles and desolations from the Assyrian spoiler (verses 17-20), whom they were blindly inviting to relieve them from a momentary danger, were coming upon the whole land, on Judah as well as Ephraim; and it would thus be reduced to a waste and desolate condition, before this promised child should enter on His work of deliverance. *Birks.*

The sign suited the time of backsliding and apostasy. For it told the house of David that, wearying God as they were doing by their sins, He would vindicate His cause in a way they little expected or desired; that He would secure the establishment of His covenant with the house of David, by raising up a child in whom the Divine should actually commingle with the human; but that this child should be the offspring of some unknown virgin, not of Ahaz or of any ordinary occupant of the throne; and that, meanwhile, everything should go to desolation and ruin—first, indeed, in the allied kingdoms of Israel and Syria (verse 16), but afterward also in the kingdom of Judah (verses 17-25); so that the destined possessor of the throne, when he came, should find all in a prostrate condition, and grow up like one in an impoverished and stricken country, fed with the simple fare of a cottage shepherd (cf. verse 16 with 22). *P. F.*

The article, "the virgin," is significant. It can refer to no wife of the prophet, since this was to be a royal child; nor of Ahaz, of whom no younger son came to the throne; nor of Hezekiah, still a mere child. The allusion is to the first promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. This promise had been limited, first to the race of Abraham, and next, to the seed of David; and "the virgin" must thus mean that damsel of the race of David, for whom the high honor was reserved, in God's secret counsel, to give birth in due season to the long-promised king of Israel, the Saviour of the world. *Birks.*

Only one virgin and one child Immanuel are spoken of—viz., the Virgin Mary and the child

Jesus ; they are shown to the prophet in vision with no reference to *time*, but are shown so vividly that he sees them, and thinks of them as *present*, and therefore speaks of them as related to present events, and so makes the youthful years and the food of the child indications of important future facts. H. C.—If a thing at all future may be declared as a *sign*, it makes no difference whether the thing be future by three years, or by three hundred, provided that one circumstance be observed, which is, that the man, or body of men, to whom the fact is declared to be a sign, shall exist and see the thing accomplished. This was manifestly the case here. For not only Ahaz, to whom the second prophecy was delivered, saw that fulfilled as to the two kings his enemies, but also the house of David, to whom the first prophecy was addressed, saw that fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Kennicott.—There is no ground, grammatical, historical, or logical, for doubt as to the main point, that the Church in all ages has been right in regarding this passage as a signal and explicit prediction of the miraculous conception and nativity of Jesus Christ. A.

The essential feature of the given sign is not the fact that a virgin conceives, but that the *Messiah is Immanuel*, that the unchangeable communion of God with His people is actually made apparent in the midst of impending judgments. The mysterious nature, however, of the expression can neither here nor in Micah (5 : 2) be mistaken. The exalted nature of the Messiah is more definitely brought forward in 9 : 6, 7 : “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ; and the government is upon His shoulders ; and His name is called the Wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God” (for so must it be understood, cf. 10 : 21), “the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace ; for the increase of the government and for peace without end on David’s throne and in his kingdom, to establish and support it with judgment and justice, from henceforth and forever.” The *Messiah is evidently regarded as a Divine Being*, though here also the expressions are mysteriously indefinite. In the Messianic passage (11 : 1, sqq.), the Divine element in the Messiah appears only as the fulness of the Spirit of the Lord resting upon Him, and endowing Him for His righteous and happy rule. How close, side by side, to use Stier’s expression, the two lines of promise—the appearance of God and the appearance of the Messiah—run, and seem almost to touch without uniting, is shown also by the Messianic predictions of the subsequent prophets. We notice Jer. 23 in connection with 33 : 14-26. In

the first passage, the prophet, who in chap. 22 had declared the race of the two kings Jehoia-chin and Jehoiakim to be excluded from the throne of David, proclaims that the Lord will, at the time when He gathers His flock from all countries whither He has driven them, raise up unto David a righteous Branch. The same expression reappears (33 : 15) ; nay, “Branch” becomes even a *proper name of the Messiah* (Zech. 3 : 8 ; 6 : 12). Oehler.

The promise of Immanuel has a primary and a secondary purpose. The first and chief was to strengthen the hope of the faithful in Judah in this hour of fear and danger, that they might stay their souls anew on the covenant to Abraham and to David, and also gain some further insight into the mysterious nature and dignity of the Messiah who was to come. He was to be “Immanuel,” God with us, the Son of the Virgin, pure and sinless from His birth, knowing to choose good and refuse evil. A foundation is thus laid for all Isaiah’s later messages, centring on the same glorious Child ; the Rod from the Stem of Jesse, the Root of Jesse, the precious Corner-stone, laid by God Himself in Zion, the King to reign in righteousness, the Divine Shepherd of Israel, the Chosen and Beloved Servant of God, the Man of sorrows, the great Intercessor for transgressors, the Anointed Preacher of comfort to the mourners in Zion, the Salvation of His people, the King who speaks in righteousness, mighty to save. But a secondary object, connected with the time when this great promise is renewed, was to teach them that this Deliverer would not arise and redeem His people till sore calamities from the Assyrian spoilers had first lighted on the whole land of promise, and its fruitful Carmels, its vineyards and oliveyards, had been changed into open pasture-fields and comparative desolation. Birks.

We have what may justly be called two inspired commentaries on this prediction—one in the Old, and another in the New, Testament. The prophet Micah, the contemporary of Isaiah, evidently referring to the words before us, says immediately after announcing the birth of the future Ruler of Israel at Bethlehem, “Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she who shall bear hath brought forth” (verse 3). The peculiar expression, “she who shall bear,” points to the already designated mother of the Divine King, but only in this prediction of Isaiah designated as the virgin ; so that, in the language of Rosenmüller, “both predictions throw light on each other. Micah discloses the Divine origin of the Person predicted ; Isaiah

the wonderful manner of His birth." The other allusion in inspired Scripture is by Matthew, when, relating the miraculous circumstances of Christ's birth, he adds, "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child," etc. And the prophecy, as Bishop Lowth has well stated, "is introduced in so solemn a manner; the sign is so marked, as a sign selected and given by God Himself, after Ahaz had rejected the offer of any sign of his own choosing out of the whole compass of nature; the terms of the prophecy are so peculiar, and the name of the child so expressive, containing in them much more than the circumstances of the birth of a common child required, or even admitted, that we may easily suppose, that in minds prepared by the general expectation of a great deliverer to spring from the house of David, they raised hopes far beyond what the occasion suggested; especially when it was found that in the subsequent prophecy, delivered immediately afterward, this child, called Immanuel, is treated as the Lord and Prince of Judah (8: 8-10). Who could this be, other than the heir of the throne of David? under which character a Divine person had been promised." P. F.

The Christ would be both God and man, Immanuel, not only the Son of Adam but the Son of God, at once David's Son and David's Lord, the Son of Mary and the Son of the Highest. Isaiah prepared the faithful for this mysterious parentage by his grand prophecy of the birth of the virgin's son, Immanuel. The Messiah would not abhor the virgin's womb, that He might become "God with us." This was done when Messiah was born of Mary, and the Son of God became Jesus, the Son of man (Isa. 7: 14; Matt. 1: 22, 23). The Christ was then divulged, and the Messianic idea fully developed. All the scattered rays of prophecy were concentrated in Jesus as their focus. All the confluent streams of grace and truth met and merged in Him, the end of the law, the goal of the grand march of Messianic prophecy, the revelation of the mystery of the ages, the denouement of the Divine redemptive plan, "the brightness of God's glory and the express impress of His substance" (Heb. 1: 1-3). We find, therefore, not only a gradual objective Messianic revelation, but a corresponding subjective Messianic consciousness, which grew like the rising sun unto the perfect day, and as the mountain stream into the rolling river. At the commencement of this development the promised seed was general, comprehending Christ;

then the special seed of Abraham as a unity, his one seed by Sarah and not by Hagar, and his one son Isaac, and afterward the one royal tribe of Judah, the one family and one son of David, prefigured the coming Messianic personage. And now Christ, as the one grand seed of faithful Abraham, has become the typical head of the unity of all believers, the centre of the one collective seed, who are federally and morally all one in Him (Gal. 3: 28). There was a progressive development from seed in general to a particular seed or people; next to a special seed or person; and thence to a living personage, who was to be prophet, priest and king of Israel and of God. The Messianic idea is thus realized in the threefold appellation, Jesus Christ the Lord; the first being His human name among men, the second His historical and official designation, and the last His personal Divine title as Son of God, King of kings and King of Zion (Luke. 2: 11). *Jas. Scott.*

Jesus Christ is God. His divinity is not an acquired decoration of His human soul in His maturer years. It is not merely the highest degree of moral likeness to the Universal Father. It is not the lustre of a soul perpetually communing with God. Our Lord's divinity is not the mere crown and beauty of His manhood; it is not the point which was reached when as man He had in sanctity and sublime perfection reached what other men account the superhuman. Nor is it either the reflected admiration of a loving and grateful disciple, or the idealizing effort of an infant Church, warm in its reverential love, and too intent on worship to be capable of reserve or of criticism. The Godhead of Jesus is not a metaphor, it is a great and solemn fact, the confession of which is for us Christians no lifeless formula or dead dogma. It is not an unwelcome admission, grudgingly yielded by us in obedience to the pressure of orthodox formularies, or to the sterner necessities of honest criticism. It is a living, an intense conviction, resting at once upon authority and upon conscience. It is a conviction to part with which is to part with all that can really brighten the dark prison-house of the human spirit. Deny the Godhead of Jesus, and you forfeit the essence of Christianity. *Liddon.*

That very truth which the Jews of our Lord's time could not bear even to be mentioned in their presence—the truth of His proper Deity—was the indispensable preliminary to the realization of all that was predicted. Hence it is that the four evangelists, each in his own peculiar way, but with a common insight into the

import of Old Testament prophecy and the real necessities of the case, all begin with laying this foundation. John opens his narrative with a formal and lengthened statement of Christ's relation to the Godhead, and broadly asserts that in Him the Divine Word was made flesh. Luke also relates at length the circumstances of the miraculous conception, and with the view evidently of conveying the impression that this mode of being born into the world stood in essential connection with Christ's being, in the strictest sense, "the Son of the Highest." Even Mark, while observing the greatest possible brevity, does not omit the essential point, and begins his narrative with the most startling announcement that ever headed an historical composition, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, *the Son of God*." And the first evangelist, who wrote more immediately for his Jewish brethren, and continually selects the points that were best fitted to exhibit Jesus as the Messiah of the Jewish Scriptures, characteristically enters on *his* narrative by describing the circumstances of Christ's miraculous birth as the necessary fulfilment of one of the most marvellous prophecies of the incarnation: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us." P. F.

Majesty took upon itself humility; strength, weakness; eternity, mortality, without impairing the properties of each nature and substance that unite in one person. In order to pay the debt due by man, the inviolable nature (of God) united itself with our frail nature in order that, according to the requirements of our case, one and the same Mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, might be mortal according to one side of His being, and immortal according to the other. The true God was, accordingly, born in the full and perfect nature of a real man, complete in the attributes of both His own nature and of ours. For He that is truly God is also truly man; nor is this union merely apparent, the lowliness of humanity and the highness of Deity communicating themselves to each other. For as God is not changed by compassion, so the humanity is not crushed by the dignity conferred upon it. For each nature does, in connection with the other, what is peculiar to itself—*i.e.*, the Word does what is the Word's, while the flesh carries out what belongs to the flesh. *Letter of Leo the Great to Flavian.*

The Lord of heaven and earth blended our nature with His own; He took the manhood into God. He bound us up with Himself as one indivisible being; He shared not only our state, but our nature and essence; He took from us a human nature that He might give us a divine. And this mystery of the God and man is a mystery for everlasting. As there ever has been, and ever will be, the eternal Son of God, so will there ever remain the eternal Son of man. This blessed union is incapable of dissolution; our immortality is suspended on its continuance; we could not have life eternal unless God were to be man eternal. The firstfruits will remain with the rest of the harvest in glory. Yes; forevermore shall the ransomed of Zion behold their own bright model in heaven, and grow more divine as they behold. He will still, as man and God, be the link that connects them with the Father; this poor humanity for which He suffered so bitterly He loves too deeply to part with it. It is said that mothers love with most tenderness the child for whom they have suffered most; the agonies of the eternal endured in our behalf have attached Him forever to our world and our nature. That nature He retains forever. W. A. B.

The taking on Himself of our flesh by the Eternal Word was no makeshift to meet a mighty, yet still a particular, emergent need; a need which, conceding the liberty of man's will, and that it was possible for him to have continued in his first state of obedience, might never have occurred. It was not a mere result and reparation of the fall—such an act as, except for that, would never have been; but lay bedded at a far deeper depth in the counsels of God for the glory of His Son, and the exaltation of that race formed in His image and His likeness. For, against those who regard the incarnation as an arbitrary, or as merely an historic event, and not an ideal one as well, we may well urge this weighty consideration, that the Son of God did not, in and after His ascension, strip off this human nature again; He did not regard His humanity as a robe, to be worn for a while and then laid aside; the convenient form of His manifestation, so long as He was conversing with men on earth, but the fitness of which had with that manifestation passed away. So far from this, we know, on the contrary, that He assumed our nature forever, married it to Himself, glorified it with His own glory, carried it as the form of His eternal subsistence into the world of angels, before the presence of His Father. Had there been any-

thing accidental here, had the assumption of our nature been an afterthought (I speak as a man), this marriage of the Son of God with that nature could scarcely be conceived. He could hardly have so taken it, unless it had possessed an ideal as well as an historic fitness; unless pre-established harmonies had existed, such harmonies as only a Divine intention could have brought about between the one and the other. *Trench.*

Our human nature became the tabernacle of God, that He might dwell with men, and make them His people, and be their God. It was an incarnation in which the heart of God reached the most distant part of His spiritual creation—a descent in which infinite greatness takes the deepest form of condescension, and infinite goodness the tenderest form of compassion. When a man's spirit has been opened to it, it reveals to him a universe of love, at the summit and base of which are Divine majesty and human misery, and the incarnate Son of God is seen touching both and bringing them together. *Ker.*

The doctrine of incarnation is the glory of the spiritual history of mankind. It is the central fact in the scheme of moral providence, its unity, harmony and fountain of power. It is the realization of the highest purposes of God, the discovery of the depth of His wisdom, love and might. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in flesh." If Jesus be the incarnation of divinity, it is no longer hard to believe that both His entrance into the world and His departure from it were supernatural. So far from being anomalous, this is altogether necessary and natural. Anything else would not have been in keeping with the history. His virgin-mother is a beautiful and simple reality. It would have been incongruous, even offensive, had *He* not been thus physically separated from *all* of human kind. His resurrection also, and His ascension to heaven, are transparencies as pure as His miraculous birth. It was most meet that, having lain in the grave and "tasted death for every man," He should rise and pass into the skies. *J. Young.*

The ascended Christ upon the throne, and the historical Christ upon the earth, teach us what man may be, the one in regard of dignity, the other in regard of goodness. Here *is* a fact. Such a life was verily once lived on earth; a life of true manhood, whatever more it was. In it we may see two things: first, we may see from His perfect purity what it is possible for man to become; and, second, we may see from His experience who said, "The Father hath not left Me alone, because I do always the

things which please Him," how close a fellowship is possible between the human spirit that lives for and by obedience, and the Father of us all. The man Christ Jesus was visited by God, yea, God dwelt with Him ever; whatever more He was—and He was infinitely more—He was also our example of communion, as He was our example of righteousness. A. M.

The incarnation teaches us, as nothing else conceivably can, *the essential dignity of our human nature.* For the chief distinction of this human nature and the supreme evidence of its soaring dignity is that—it *is capable of the Divine.* God *can* come into it, take it up into His own nature, dwell in it. What promise and potency must there not be in a nature of which this is true! What ranges of culture, what illimitable reaches of development must there not open before a being possessed of such nature as that God deigns to descend into it! And right here is the immense and unfailing spring of courage for all beneficent and uplifting endeavor. Sunk as low as you may find it, human nature is yet a nature capable of the Divine. The incarnation teaches us the truth of *a new headship for our fallen race, by which the fallen may be lifted, even unto the eternal glory.* Adam is the head of the race by generation, through whom the race has fallen into fearful moral lapse. The incarnate Christ is the head of the race by regeneration, by whom the race may be lifted into the deliverance and dignity of the sons of God, into coheirship with Jesus Christ in His glory. *W. Hoyt.*

18. The evil times threatened in verse 17 are here more explicitly described as arising from the presence and oppression of foreigners, especially Assyrians and Egyptians, whose number and vexatious impositions are expressed by comparing them to swarms of noxious and annoying insects, pouring into the country by Divine command. A.

20. "A razor, hired from beyond the river." Ahaz, in spite of God's warning, was bent on hiring the king of Assyria to crush his present rivals, Rezin and Pekah (2 K. 16: 8-10). Proud of this stroke of policy, he despised the warnings and the promises sent to him by the prophet. It succeeded for the moment, as faithless expediency often seems to do, but it would be bitterness in the end. His sin would lead to his own punishment, and that of his people. God Himself would hire this king of Assyria, by the hope of ample spoil, to waste Judah as well as Ephraim. Not only the hair of the head, the luxury and wealth of the king and his nobles, but even the hair of the feet,

the scanty necessities of the poorest classes, would be scraped and shorn away. It would consume "even the beard," the symbol in the East of all that was sacred and venerable. The treasures of God's own Temple, the honor and dignity of the priesthood, would also be swept away by this fierce spoiler. *Birks.*

21-24. There was the clear threatening, too, of long and desolating invasions. By the eating of curds and honey is signified the cessation of all the ordinary processes of agriculture. There is no corn, no vintage, no olives, but such produce only as grows of itself. On the sloping hill-sides, where there were wont to be vineyards with a thousand vines, each worth a piece of silver, the scanty population will come with bows and arrows to shoot the game which has found there an undisturbed covert, or to pasture the heifer, or two or three sheep, which are all they have managed to save from the invading foe. R. P. S.

21, 22. In consequence of these spoliations, the condition of the country will be wholly changed. The population left shall not be agricultural, but pastoral. Instead of living on the fruits of the soil, they shall subsist upon spontaneous products, such as milk and honey, which shall be abundant only because the people will be few and the uncultivated grounds extensive.

25. Not only the fields, not only the vineyards, shall be overrun with thorns and briers, but the very hills, now laboriously cultivated with the hand, shall be given up to like desolation. The reference is probably to the hills of Judea, anciently cultivated to the very top, by means of terraces that still exist. Thus understood, the verse merely strengthens the foregoing description, by declaring that even the most carefully cultivated portions of the land should not escape the threatened desolation. A.

ISAIAH, CHAPTERS VIII., IX. : 1-7.

8 : 1 AND the LORD said unto me, Take thee a great tablet, and write upon it with the pen
2 of a man, For Maher-shalal-hash-baz ; and I will take unto me faithful witnesses to record,
3 Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah. And I went unto the prophetess ;
and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said the LORD unto me, Call his name Maher-shalal-
4 hash-baz. For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and, My mother, the
riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried away before the king of Assyria.
5, 6 And the LORD spake unto me yet again, saying, Forasmuch as this people hath refused the
7 waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son ; now therefore,
behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the River, strong and many, *even* the
king of Assyria and all his glory : and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all
8 his banks : and he shall sweep onward into Judah ; he shall overflow and pass through ; he
shall reach even to the neck ; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy
land, O Immanuel.
9 Make an uproar, O ye peoples, and ye shall be broken in pieces ; and give ear, all ye of far
countries : gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces ; gird yourselves, and ye shall
10 be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall be brought to nought ; speak the
11 word, and it shall not stand : for God is with us. For the LORD spake thus to me with a
12 strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say
ye not, A conspiracy, concerning all whereof this people shall say, A conspiracy ; neither
13 fear ye their fear, nor be in dread *thereof*. The LORD of hosts, him shall ye sanctify ; and let
14 him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary ; but for a
stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a
15 snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble thereon, and fall, and be
broken, and be snared, and be taken.
16, 17 Bind thou up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait for the
18 LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and
the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the
LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

19 And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto the wizards, that chirp and that mutter : should not a people seek unto their God? on behalf of
 20 the living *should they seek* unto the dead? To the law and to the testimony ! if they speak
 21 not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them. And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry : and it shall come to pass that, when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse by their king and by their God, and turn their
 22 faces upward : and they shall look unto the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the
 9 : 1 gloom of anguish ; and into thick darkness *they shall be* driven away. But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time hath he made it glorious, by the
 2 way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light : they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath
 3 the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased their joy : they joy
 4 before thee according to the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, thou hast
 5 broken as in the day of Midian. For all the armour of the armed man in the tumult, and the
 6 garments rolled in blood, shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given : and the government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with judgement and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this.

Chap. 8. According to the course of thought, chapter 8 should close with verse 7 of chapter 9. The subject is not complete at any point short of that. These are the times of Ahaz. The historical circumstances which gave occasion to this message are essentially those upon which chap. 7 is based—viz., Ahaz, his court and many at least of his people, greatly alarmed by the combination of Syria and Ephraim against Judah ; and in order to avert this danger, calling to their aid the king of Assyria. This policy displeased God, inasmuch as it implied a most unreasonable, ungrateful, and cruel unbelief in Himself, and exposed them to all the evils of being dependent upon the favor of an idolatrous and wicked nation. The Lord therefore first assures them that they have nothing to fear from Damascus and Samaria (the capitals representing the kingdoms), since those cities would soon be despoiled and erelong laid desolate ; and next, He declares that He will scourge and punish them by bringing upon them as a foe the very power they had been inviting to their aid as a friend, the great Assyrian hosts. In discoursing upon this point, the prophet aims especially to encourage faith in God and not in Assyria or in any other power ; also to lead them to fear God and none else besides, and to resort to God and not to spirits of the dead or of the living for knowledge of the future or for relief from danger. H. C.

The prediction of the overthrow of Syria and Israel is now renewed in the form of a symbol-

ical name, to be inscribed on a tablet and attested by two witnesses, and afterward applied to the prophet's new-born son, whose progress as an infant is made the measure of the event (verses 1-4). It is then foretold that the judgment denounced upon Syria and Israel should extend to Judah, as a punishment for distrust of God and reliance upon human aid, in consequence of which the kingdom should be imminently threatened with destruction, yet delivered for the sake of Immanuel, by whom the strength and wisdom of all enemies should be alike defeated (verses 5-10). The Messiah Himself is then introduced as speaking, warning the prophet and the true believers neither to share in the apprehensions nor to fear the reproaches of the people, but to let Jehovah be an object of exclusive fear and reverence to them, as He would be an occasion of destruction to the unbelievers, from whom the true sense of this revelation was to be concealed, and restricted to His followers, who, together with the prophet and the Son of God Himself, should be for signs and wonders to the multitude, while waiting for the manifestation of His presence, and refusing to consult any other oracle except the word of God, an authority despised by none but those doomed to the darkness of despair, which is described as settling down upon them, with a sudden intimation, at the close of a change for the better, especially in reference to that part of the country which had been most afflicted and despised (verses 11-22). A.

1-4. *The birth of Maher-shalal-hash-baz.* These verses are plainly a sequel to the former message. The promise of Immanuel was a pledge of God's unchanging mercy to the house of David, though long and sore judgments were first coming on the land. This birth of Isaiah's son, and his name, were a pledge of the speedy fall of Pekah and Rezin by the Assyrian. The date is the second year of Ahaz. His third year was the last of Pekah, and toward its close the prediction was fulfilled (2 K. 15:30; 16:8-10). The tablet would announce that the prophetess would bear a son to be so named, in less than a year; and that before this child could utter its first articulate speech, the judgment on Ephraim and Syria would have come. *Birks.*

1-4. In these verses the Lord predicts that Damascus and Samaria, the capitals respectively of Syria and Ephraim, shall be plundered within two or three years by the king of Assyria. Special arrangements are made to fix the date of the prophecy and the interval of time before its fulfilment so as to leave no room to doubt that it was a real prophecy spoken not only before the event, but before such an event had seemed to human view at all probable. These arrangements comprised (1) the writing of the emphatic and significant phrase, "Maher-shalal-hash-baz" upon a large "roll," or rather a smooth tablet, in very large letters; and (2) in giving this name to a child born to the prophet, with the Divine promise that before this child could say "my father, and my mother," the event predicted by his name should take place. This name signifies "Speed the plunder, the spoiling hastens on." More briefly and nearer to the form of the Hebrew, thus: Hasten—booty; speed-spoil. Writing "with a man's pen" is supposed to refer to letters in common use and known to the common people, another sort of pen being used perhaps for characters, known to the learned only. The object was to make the writing entirely legible to all. Verse 2 is supposed to continue the words spoken by the Lord to the prophet, "And let me take witnesses for the truth of this prophecy that I now give you," even Uriah, the same probably who appears in 2 K. 16:10-16 co-operating with the king in idol-worship, and therefore a specially suitable witness in this case; and Zechariah, who was doubtless the father-in-law of Ahaz, and maternal grandfather of Hezekiah. (See 2 K. 18:2 and 2 Chron. 29:1.) These were "faithful witnesses," such men as Ahaz especially would confide in. The significant name given to this child

corresponds to the case of his other son, "Shear-jashub," "a remnant shall return;" and also to the three children born to Hosea, each of whom had its significant name. All these children became through their very names prophetic heralds; every utterance or thought of either name suggesting the event it predicted. H. C.

5-8. Because this people refuse the protection of the God of Israel, and because they were at that moment exulting in the supposed success of their policy in calling in the Assyrian king, therefore the Lord will bring this same king and his victorious hosts over their land. This Assyrian raid is beautifully expressed here as an *inundation* of the great Euphrates, which is often called as here "*the river*," the great river of Western Asia, and subject, much like the Nile, to periodical inundations. It rises mightily, rushes over all its banks; having swept over Syria and Ephraim, it comes down upon Judah too, yet not quite deep enough here to drown all the people, the waters rising only to the neck. But the spreading out of his wings, the out-reaching tides of his great waters, shall fill the breadth of thy land, Immanuel—*i.e.*, the land of Judah, still under the protection of Jehovah Jesus, "God with us." Obviously this alludes to the Messiah's birth of the virgin as foretold, or rather seen in vision as present, in chap. 7:14. Hence it leaves no room for doubt that the prophet thought of this child as really the promised Messiah, already actually ruling in his power, and shielding his people under his omnipotent arm. H. C.

8. Thy land, O Immanuel. He reigns over the kingdom of David—the Son of Man, as He is the Son of God—God Himself, in His wondrous way, *with us*. Immanuel! In the whole world of realities there is nothing so real or so comforting to us as this. *Immanuel! God with us!* F. D. H.

9, 10. The course of thought here is obvious. The prophet's soul, touched with the name Immanuel, becomes all aflame with faith in Zion's King and with indignation that heathen powers should combine to lay his land desolate. So he boldly challenges them to do their worst; it should only recoil on themselves and crush them with the more terrible destruction. The mighty Immanuel will make the wrath of men praise Himself, and will gird about Him even the extremest human wrath as His weapon for their ruin. The first verb, rendered "Associate yourselves," comes rather from the Hebrew verb, which means *to do evil, to act wickedly*, used here in keen irony. Do

your worst ; be as madly wicked as you will in your rage against God ; you will only the more surely be broken to pieces. In the last clause of verse 10 the Hebrew is "for Immanuel," "for God (is) with us." H. C.—Even as a name Immanuel contains a proposition, and here this proposition is distinctly announced, but with a designed allusion to the person whom the name describes. As if he had said, "the assurance of your safety is the great truth expressed by the name of your deliverer, to wit, that God is with us." The mere retention of the Hebrew word could not convey its sense in this connection to the English reader. A.

12, 13. "Dread not, like this people, the league of Ephraim and Syria. Devise no counter league with the Assyrian king. Make no secret terms with these invaders. Form no conspiracy to set up this son of Tabeal. Bring no false charges of treason against the prophets of God. Be not terrified with rumors of new alliances abroad or treacherous plots at home. Fear only God's anger, and rest simply on His promise. Set Him high in your thoughts above every earthly power. Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself, and let Him be your fear." *Birks.*

13. *Jehovah of hosts, Him shall ye sanctify (i.e., regard and treat as a holy God, and as the Holy One of Israel), and He shall be your fear, and He your dread—i.e., the object of these feelings. If they felt as they ought toward God, as supreme and almighty, and as their own peculiar God, with whom they were united in a national covenant, they could not so distrust Him as to be alarmed at the approach of any earthly danger. The collocation of the words makes the sentence more emphatic. Him shall ye fear is substantially equivalent to Him alone shall ye fear. Thus explained, the passage is at once a condemnation of the terror inspired by the approach of the two kings, and of the application, which it had occasioned, to Assyria for aid against them. A.*

Let Him be your fear. There is something to fear in God. He speaks in wrath as well as in love ; He has a left hand that points to the outer darkness, as well as a right that shows the way to rest and eternal reward. Beware of God—for sin is not all ignorance—it is a crime of the will. Moral suasion is not enough ; sentiment alone will not do ; sweetness and light have no backbone against the seductions of sin, no motive sufficiently strong to keep men away from the sorcerous shore of the sirens. The soul must be touched with a

holy fear of God, if it is to find strength to resist the devil, and put him to flight. *J. R. Parton.*—There is a virtuous fear, which is the effect of faith ; and there is a vicious fear, which is the product of doubt. The former leads to hope, as relying on God in whom we believe ; the latter inclines to despair, as not relying on God in whom we do not believe. Persons of the one character fear to lose God ; persons of the other character fear to find Him. *Pascal.*

14. *And He (Jehovah) shall be for (or become) a holy thing (an object to be sanctified) and for a stone of stumbling.* God was the only proper object to be dreaded, feared and sanctified—i.e., regarded as a holy being in the widest and the most emphatic sense. Thus explained, the Hebrew word corresponds almost exactly to the Greek term applied to Christ by the angel who announced His birth (Luke 1 : 35). In 1 Pet. 2 : 7, where this very passage is applied to Christ, the word "precious" seems to be employed as an equivalent to the word here used. To others He is a stone of stumbling, but to you who believe He is something precious, something honored, something looked upon as holy. The same application of the words is made by Paul in Rom. 9 : 33. These quotations seem to show that the prophet's words have an extensive import, and are not to be restricted either to his own times or the time of Christ. The doctrine of the text is, that even the most glorious exhibitions of God's holiness—i.e., of His infinite perfection, may occasion the destruction of the unbeliever. The most signal illustration of this general truth was that afforded in the advent of the Saviour. It was frequently exemplified, however, in the interval, and one of these exemplifications was afforded by the conduct of the unbelieving Jews in the reign of Ahaz, to whom the only power that could save them was converted by their own unbelief into a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. A.

16-18. The Messiah, present so intimately in thought throughout the two verses preceding, appears here as the speaker. It is He who says (verse 16) "*My disciples ;*" a phrase familiar to His lips during His life in the flesh. It is He who says (verse 18), "*Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given Me ;*" these very words being cited by Paul to the Hebrews (2 : 13) as said by Jesus and as signifying that He is partaker with His children of flesh and blood, and in common with them, has in God a Father, so that they are all of *one*. But the Messiah being the speaker, what is His mean-

ing? This: Bind up and seal in the hearts of my obedient and trustful people these great truths just spoken. They are to be My witnesses to these truths.

19, 20. When they advise you to go to those who profess to know the spirits, the super-wise men ("wizards"), "who peep and mutter," as if strange, uncouth sounds best befitted the dignity of such spirits and of human fellowship with them; then reply to them, Should not people seek unto their own God if they would know the future or the things of the unseen world? Has not the great God all knowledge and supreme control over all other worlds and over all the future of this? Is it not all sufficient that you may go to your own God for all wisdom and for all needful help? Besides, can the dead bring any help to the living? Go rather to the law and the testimony, the sure word of God, for this reveals all that mortals need to know under the pressure of present ills or the fear of the otherwise dark and unknown future. If any class of men discard this word of God and speak not according to its revelations, they are those upon whose darkness no dawn of hope shall ever rise. H. C.

20. The prophet appeals to the *law and the testimony* as to an authority which was at once supreme and final. What was this *law and testimony* if it was not an acknowledged external code which could be *bound up and sealed* among the Lord's disciples? The moral platform from which the prophets spoke to the men of their own day is abolished if there was no antecedent law to which to recall them, and for the violation of which they could be re-proved. There must have been a previous education in spiritual truth ere the prophetic enunciations on either side could have been given or received. The entire foundation of their work was laid in the spiritual recognition of a standard from which their own generation had departed. *Leathes.*

A cardinal canon of certitude for the Christian is, "The Scripture saith it." Now a singular feature of the entire Bible, too little noted, is its own certitude. It is self-assertive throughout; note Gen. 1:1 and John 1:1 as specimens. It speaks, like the Master, "as one having authority." Its Mosaic law bristles with imperious phraseology—"thou shalt," "shalt not." Its gospel bears the sanction, "... shall be saved." From Genesis to Revelation not one uncertain note is struck. The entire canon carries the air of easy lordship. This well-known characteristic of Christ's

words and manner marks His Book also, the Bible, through and through. The sources of this certitude are not hard to discover. These are two, uttering a blended stream of authority, the first Divine, the second human. God speaks throughout the Book, but not through a tube. He speaks through certain men who are conscious of their appointment to the task and of their authority in discharge of this task. The two sources are not co-ordinate, though in the production of the Book they are co-ordinated—that is, the authority of God in Scripture antedates and conditions that of its human authors, but in actual speech the two become blended. Yet neither is lost in the other. It takes both to make the Book. The more remote authority of God lends supreme sanction to what His human agents say, and holds over from age to age through all periods of human production, unifying His Book. Yet if the authority of the human authors also were wanting, we might have some kind of a Divine message indeed, but we should not have the Bible. There is the dual note of certitude throughout the Book—the self-assertive consciousness of the inspiring Spirit who knew whereof He spake and the self-assertive consciousness of Moses, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Matthew, and the others one by one, whose personalities one by one carry to us weight and definite flavor, who also knew whereof they spake, and who show that they knew it.

Two things result from this dual certitude of utterance: First, the Book is vitalized through and through, by the Spirit of God, with the Divine thought, tingling and red with life to its finger-tips, Divine in every turn of expression or shade of meaning; second, it brings us into touch—not with the ever-present Divine Will only, but equally—with the will and within range of the personal magnetism of more than a score of the picked men of the ages, until we drink in instruction from and bow to the appointed authority of the leader of the Exodus, the poet-king, the seer of Babylon, Paul and Paul's physician, the preacher at Pentecost, the exile on Patmos, and all that glorious fellowship who were honored of God by specific and fit appointment to this unique service of His Church and this unique honor in the annals both of literature and of the kingdom of Christ. Of this honor we may not rob them without defacing and somewhat depotentiizing the blessed Book, nor without grave damage to ourselves and to the Church of God. Just because inspiration is not mechanical but vital, it involves both the distinct personality of the revealed

God and the distinct personalities of His several known human agents and co-workers. Lacking either of these things it were something less than the Bible, "the Word of God written." Lacking either the certitude of its known Divine Author or the certitude of its known human authors, its authority for man might remain, but its power over men would be immeasurably reduced. The word as God gave it to us must be left untarnished by elimination of the inbreathing Spirit from a single page or by the erasure of so much as one human name and personality inwoven with and consciously entering into the Divine utterance. *W. W. Faris.*

We do not ignore reason. She has her mission in regard to the written Word. She is to examine its claims to inspiration. She is to weigh the external and the internal evidences of its divinity. But when she has settled that question her work is done. Thenceforth she is to sit at the feet of the great Teacher and reverently receive His words. She is to study them so as to comprehend their full meaning. But she is never to sit in judgment upon them as wise or unwise, as right or wrong. They come with authority. They are the utterances of Him who gave us reason and who can never tell us anything that is contrary to it, though He may tell us many things that transcend it. *Interior.*

We take the Bible into our hands, and examine diligently its different sections, delivered in different ages of mankind. There is a mighty growth in the discoveries of God's nature and will, as time rolls on from creation to redemption; but as knowledge is increased, and brighter light thrown on the Divine purpose and dealings, there is never the point at which we are brought to a pause by the manifest contradiction of one part to another. It is the wonderful property of the Bible, though the authorship is spread over a long line of centuries, that it never withdraws any truth once advanced, and never adds new without giving fresh force to the old. The brief notices given to patriarchs expand in the institutions of the law and under the breathings of prophecy, till at length, in the days of Christ and His apostles, they burst into magnificence, and fill a world with redemption. It is throughout the same system for the rescue of human kind by the interference of a surety. *Melville.*

Chap. 9. The subject of chap. 8 continues over into chap. 9 to the end of verse 7. Then follows a message which fills out this chapter and the first four verses of chap. 10, addressed

to the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, variously named Jacob, Israel and Ephraim.

1. The exact thought of the original may be expressed thus: "But darkness shall not be [permanent] where this oppression lay; for as the former time dishonored and oppressed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the latter time shall greatly honor and bless those lands, even the way of the sea beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations." The northern and eastern border tribes, including Zebulun and Naphtali on the west of Jordan and the two and a half tribes on the east, had been held in low esteem, as being far from Jerusalem the honored centre; less enlightened religiously, earlier and more apostate into idolatry, more exposed to the nation's foreign enemies (see 1 Chron. 5:25, 26), and more corrupted by heathen families and tribes living among them. Deep traces of the same disesteem appear on the face of the New Testament history. (See John 1:46 and 7:52; also Matt. 26:69 and Acts 2:7.) Over this region the waves of the great Assyrian river had swept with terrible devastation; but it should not be always first in calamity and darkness. The latter time should reverse this law and give to that region distinguished honor, as the next verse proceeds to say. *H. C.*

2-7. Here the message changes, with a striking abruptness, from the midnight of sorrow to a daybreak of hope and joy; from the Assyrian and Chaldean desolations to the times of Immanuel, the great hope of Israel, and the heir of David's throne. The same region, the borders of the sea of Galilee, where the sorrow of captivity had begun, was to witness the first dawn of the joyful change.

2. This promise is quoted (Matt. 4:14-16), and is given as the reason why our Lord chose Capernaum by the sea of Galilee for the main seat of His earthly ministry. That same district of the Holy Land, marked by the first step of national downfall, was also chosen for the first dawn of light, when it was made the scene of our Lord's personal ministry. He who was despised and rejected of men would choose His apostles and dawn upon the benighted people in despised Galilee. *Birks.*

3. The prophet now, by a sudden apostrophe, addresses God Himself, who, by bestowing on the Galileans this *great light*, would not only honor them, but afford occasion of great joy to all the true Israel, including those who should be gathered from the Gentiles. *Thou hast enlarged the nation (i.e., Israel in general), thou hast increased its joy* (literally, to it thou

hast increased the joy), *they rejoice before Thee like the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.* A.

5. Carrying forward the same line of thought, the prophet adds yet another cause for the nation's joy. "For every war shoe of the soldier who arms himself at the cry, *To battle!* and every garment rolled in human blood shall be burned—the food of fire." All that belongs to war—the armor and the weapons of the soldier and the garments drenched in the blood of the slain shall be swept away with fire; and *War itself shall die!* Unfortunately the English translation misses the full sense and mars the exquisite beauty of this verse. The Messiah abolishes all war; but not until His foes are either swept away by His judgments or melted into penitence and won over to submission by His love. This prophecy looks at the glorious results—the annihilation of all that makes war a scene of horror.

6. From the effects and the results of Messiah's reign, the prophet comes to speak here specifically of the Messiah Himself. A wondrous child is born to the race of man, all unique and peculiar; born a prince, to bear on His shoulder the insignia of supreme power (as the Orientals wore a key upon the shoulder, and modern occidentals, an epaulette, to indicate authority); "and His name shall be called" (*i.e.*, He shall *truly be*, and therefore shall be worthy to bear these significant names) "Wonderful" (for "great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh"); "Counsellor" (for on Him shall rest the spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and might; the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord," etc., Isa. 11:2); "the Mighty God" (not a god in any inferior sense; but *the* Mighty God, Creator and Lord of all); "the Everlasting Father" (a name entirely applicable to Him as the Creator of all worlds, and as being truly a Father to His people; existing, moreover, through all the depths of a past eternity, and onward through the cycles of an eternal future); also, "the Prince of Peace" (the glorious King whose reign shall be the consummation of peace and prosperity throughout this otherwise troubled and sin-cursed earth). Nor this only; but He gives peace, even a "peace that passeth all understanding," to those who are justified by faith in Him (Rom. 5:1; Phil. 4:7), and who abide in Him with faith unflinching and love supreme. "Everlasting Father," literally Father of eternity, may mean either, existing eternally, and in this sense one "who only hath immortality" (1 Tim. 6:16); or

one that gives eternal life to His people. H. C.—The natural and striking application of the words is to Jesus Christ, as the promised *child*, emphatically *born for us and given to us*, as the *Son of God* and the *Son of man*, as being *wonderful* in His person, works and sufferings—a *counsellor*, prophet or authoritative teacher of the truth, a wise administrator of the Church, and confidential adviser of the individual believer—a real man, and yet the *Mighty God—eternal* in His own existence, and the *giver of eternal life* to others—the great *peace-maker* between God and man, between Jew and Gentile, the umpire between nations, the abolisher of war, and the giver of internal peace to all who *being justified by faith have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ* (Rom. 5:1). A.

The words of this prophecy refer to what the prophet had said in chap. 7 respecting Immanuel, the son of the virgin, and also to the first prediction of the seed of the woman, and to the seed of Abraham, in whom all nations were to be blessed, and to Shiloh—that is, the son whom Jacob had promised. *Haldane*.—Abraham *did* see the Saviour's day and was glad. Moses, as lawgiver, did predict the Redeemer, and the law given him was the purposed preparation for the "truth and grace by Jesus Christ." Shiloh does come, with His never-departing sceptre of peace, as Israel promised. All the immense and costly system of sacrifices does verily serve its predestined end as the "shadow of better things to come," things which did come in Him who "once offered up Himself," the Refiner and Purifier of all the sons of Levi, at once High-Priest and Victim, "made higher than the heavens," "continuing ever," "having an unchangeable priesthood," "ever living to make intercession." David, chieftain of kings, takes his singular exaltation not only from the personal worth of his penitence and the inspiration of his song, but as the regal ancestor of the human part in the Prince of all the kings of the earth. The prophecies from age to age and along the pages of the Bible resound the ever-strengthening and ever-clearer cry, "He cometh! the Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace! Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" F. D. H.

What mean these expressions—His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Prince of Peace—if they do not mark the Divine nature of the Messiah? The words of the seventh verse announce expressly a blessedness and an

eternal reign, accompanied with judgment and righteousness, which can only be understood of Jesus Christ, being totally inapplicable to any other king. *Haldane*.—Great names indeed. But where is the name that is above every name, the name of Jesus, at which every knee shall bow? Perhaps you will find in all these names that one name, but drawn out at length and poured forth. Nor could He at all be called or be a Saviour, if one of these were wanting. *Bernard*.—The Scriptures style Him Jehovah-jireh (the Lord will provide); Jehovah-nissi (the Lord my banner); Jehovah-shalom (the Lord send peace); Jehovah-rophi (the Lord that healeth thee); Jehovah-tsidkenu (the Lord our righteousness); the Prince of peace; the Prince of life; the King of Zion; Immanuel, God with us; the living God; the true God; the only wise God; the God over the whole earth; the mighty God; God over all, blessed for evermore; Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; the same yesterday, today, and forever; "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, or can see, to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen." *Sherman*.

A child is born. No sleeper waked at His coming; but only they who watched through the night had intelligence of His advent. The earth that night did not shake; the heaven that night did not tremble. Only a few childlike souls, who then kept vigil at His birth, trembled; yet their trembling was a trembling for joy. "The eternal light enters," says the poet, "and gives the world a new splendor; it shines clearly at midnight, and makes us children of the light. He whom the whole circumference of the world could not embrace lies in the womb of Mary. He who alone sustains the universe has become a little infant." He who came the first time to save sinners will come the second time to judge them; He who came the first time to bear our sins will come the second time to condemn them. Now we are enjoying the day of comfort, when the Lord does not appear in the tempest but in the soft, gentle sound; oh, then let our hearts be touched by this soft, gentle sound! Let us kneel down at the manger, let us worship with the pious shepherds, let us strew myrrh with the kings from the East. *Tholuck*.

A Son is given. Where did this Man, so fair, so radiant, so human and yet so superhuman, so universal and yet so individual, where

did He come from? and where did the Gospel, which flows from Him, and which has done such things in the world as it has done, where did it come from? "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?" If it be true that Jesus Christ is either mistakenly represented in the gospels, or that He made enthusiastic claims which cannot be verified, and if it be true that the faith in a Resurrection, on which Christianity is suspended, and which produced such fruits as we know have been produced, is a delusion; then the noblest lives that ever were lived in the world have found their impulse in a falsehood or a dream; and the richest clusters that ever have yielded wine for the cup have grown upon a thorn. If like produces like, you cannot account for Christ and Christianity by anything short of the belief in His Divine mission. This Man, when He claimed to be God's Son and the world's Saviour, was no brain-sick enthusiast; and the results show that the Gospel which His followers proclaim rests upon no lie. *A. M.*

Wonderful. In the announcement of His advent and in the records of His life there is a history which rises above all histories. Christ can no more be classified with mankind than His miracles can be reduced to ordinary events. His whole life attests the truth that He is from above, and that He came to save the lost. Christianity is, in this view, "an historically superhuman movement in the world, that is visibly entered into it and organized to be an institution in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the central figure; He is the unfailing power; and with Him the entire fabric either stands or falls." Christ was Himself a revelation of God. "He was the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person;" He was "God manifest in the flesh." Humble as He was among men, He willed to be a king, and His ministerial work was one continued proclamation of His absolute and unrivalled sway; and when that ministry on earth had terminated, He encouraged His disciples by the declaration, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," and by the thrilling promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." As we study His character and His claims, we are constrained to acknowledge the truth of Isaiah's prophecy: "And His name shall be called Wonderful;" and "we discover, as did the first Christians, beneath and beyond all that meets the eye of sense and the eye of conscience, the eternal Person of our Lord Himself. It is not the miracles, but the Maker; not the character, but the living sub-

ject; not the teaching, but the Master; not even the death or the resurrection, but He who died and rose again; upon whom Christian thought, Christian love, Christian resolution, ultimately rest." To Him alone believers on earth, like the ransomed in glory, turn as "all their salvation and all their desire." *W. Frazer*.

Wonderful, Counsellor. There is one centre in which all elements of wonder in the Bible are found united—Jesus Christ. He is the keystone of its arch, and it falls or stands with Him. He is more; He is the firmament that holds all its stars and its brightness. But for Him there would have been no Bible, and if we read it without Him it has no coherence and no guiding thought. All the struggling aspirations of the ancient church converge to Him as rays to a focus, and all the great forces of truth and goodness now in the world emerge from Him, whether they know it or not. Isaiah declares His name to be "Wonderful," "Counsellor," and Paul assures us that "in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." If the claims of Jesus Christ are to be maintained, as they must and will be, it is not by lessening, but by enlarging them. We must hold that there is nothing good or true or pure among men but in some way it has its source in Him, for "He is the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." *Ker*.

In Christ, the man Christ Jesus, the Son of God, there lie the thoughts for all our knowledge, the master principles of all our conceptions, the light of all our seeing; in Him, His person, His deeds, His utterances, His relations to men, His relation to God, there is the formative basis of everything that is worth thinking about and knowing in regard to every subject which does not belong to the mere material life of man. All philosophy, all ethics, all reasonable history of humanity, the principles of all the communities into which men shall aggregate themselves, light upon the nature of man's spirit, light upon the relations of man to God, the hopes that burn bright with immortality in the midst of the darkness of the grave, and if there be any other theme above the level of the beasts that perish and the wants that are like theirs, they are all to be found in Him—in whom, by no hyperbole, are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. So in Christ, to be unfolded through slow generations in accordance with human experience and wants, is all that men can know or need to know concerning God and themselves, and the relations of both, their duties, their hopes, their fears,

and their love. . . . What we have to do is simply to yield up our understandings, our wills, our hearts, our consciences, and all the activities of our lives to Him; to be commanded, to be cleansed, to be enlightened, to be filled with His love, to be conformed to His likeness, for the voice that spoke from the heavens speaks to us yet—"This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him!" A. M.

He is Wonderful, Counsellor. Justly is He called Wonderful, for He is both God and man. His love is the wonder of angels and glorified saints; in His birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension, He was wonderful. A constant series of wonders attended Him, and without controversy, great was the mystery of godliness concerning Him. He is the Counsellor, for He was intimately acquainted with the counsels of God from eternity, and He gives counsel to the children of men, in which He consults our welfare. It is by Him that God has given us counsel (Ps. 16:7; Rev. 3:18). He is made of God to us wisdom. H.—He spoke of His own authority: "Verily, I say unto you." Other teachers explained the law; He is a lawgiver. Others drew more or less pure waters from cisterns; He is in Himself a well of water, from which all may draw. He does not argue; He affirms. He seeks no support from others' teachings; He alone is sufficient for us. He not only speaks the truth, which needs no other confirmation than His own lips, but He is the truth. We may canvass other men's teachings and distinguish their insight from their errors; we have but to accept His. The world outgrows all others; it can only grow up toward the fulness of His. Us and all the ages He teaches with authority, and the guarantee for the truth of His teaching is Himself. "Verily, verily, I say unto you." No other man has a right to say that to me. But Christ dominates the race, and the strong Son of God is the world's teacher. A. M.

The mighty God. Enshrined in the light that centres the infinitude of the invisible God, sat One from eternity, in the Divine nature and essence, who was "the express image of His person." "He was God," and "in the form of God." Whatever that form was, it was that, and that alone, that made angelic and other worship possible. To that form, as the empty space began to fill with worlds and their inhabitants, all faces turned, all worship ascended, all prayer arose. From that "form" went forth the words that called everything into being, that gave it shape and purpose, that gave it law and order. "All things were

made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made."

We have been taught to call that "form of God" "THE SON," and to speak of Him as "begotten of the Father" from the poverty of human language and the feebleness of human intellect to express or grasp "the deep things of God." It was language that might have risen spontaneously to an archangel's lips if brought suddenly and for the first time since His creation into the presence of the Visible in the bosom of the Invisible, of the Comprehensible on the throne of the Infinite, of the Approachable where he had expected the Inaccessible. "He is the Son in the bosom of the Eternal Father." But there was no priority of existence or inequality of power to give birth to the term of relationship. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In the Old Testament ages the Son revealed Himself in human form to man, whom He had created in His own "image and likeness." His name was "Jehovah," and under that name He was and still is the only Divine object of worship to the Hebrew tribes. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us," and the New Testament era began. "In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." In His sinless humanity, as in a temple, the Father and blessed Spirit stood enshrined; and the manifestations of the Divine Unity—the Three-One God in Christ—became the central truth of Christianity. "Let all the angels of God worship Him" was the decree attendant on His birth. "Let every knee bow to Him" was the decree that accompanied His ascension. . . . His is the "new name" that unites the past with the present, that breaks down "the wall of partition" between the Hebrew worshipper of Jehovah and the Christian worshipper of Christ, that makes both one in adoration of the Incarnate Son. "We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all," in Him "who was, and is, and is to come." "He is the Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace." In Him is realized for us the unity of the Godhead, the embodiment of all we seek to worship, "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end—the Almighty." It is to God, our reconciling Father in Christ, that we pray—God, looking at us through human eyes; listening to us through human ears; speaking to us in human language and by human lips; and wiping from our cheeks the tears of sorrow with gentle human hands—to "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their tres-

passes." Nearer than this we may not go; higher than this we cannot soar. *Robt. Balgarnie.*

My confidence in the flawless completeness of His human character lives or dies with my belief that He is the Eternal Word, God manifest in the flesh. Certainly we shall never truly grasp the blessed meaning of His life on earth until we look upon it all as the revelation of God. The tears of Christ are the pity of God. The gentleness of Jesus is the long-suffering of God. The tenderness of Jesus is the love of God. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father;" and all that life so beautiful but so anomalous as to be all but incredible, when we think of it as only the life of a man, glows with a yet fairer beauty, and corresponds with the nature which it expresses, when we think of it as being the declaration to us by the Divine Son of the Divine Father—our loftiest, clearest and authentic revelation of God. A. M.

By the whole tenor of revelation, the character of the Messiah is stamped as truly Divine. Who is the substance of all the testimonies of the word of God? The Messiah. Of whom do the history, the miracles, the types, and the prophecies of the Old Testament testify? Of the Messiah. To whom does the whole substance of the New Testament point? To the Messiah. In whom do all the lines of revelation concentrate? In the Messiah. To whom do all the ordinances of worship, both of the Old Testament and the New, direct the observer? To the Messiah. The doctrines of the Bible teach us His character and His works; its precepts take their sanction from His authority; its emblems adumbrate His glory. The heavens and the earth, in their creation, are a figure of His greater work. The object of the Bible is to reveal the Messiah; and in Him the Father, whom no man hath seen or can see, is revealed. Our only discovery of the full character of God is made by Jesus Christ. *Haldane.*

The relation of the Son to the Father involves more than communion—namely, unity. But if we follow the teaching of the Bible, we shall understand that the unity is the foundation of perfect communion, and the communion the manifestation, so far as it can be manifested, of the unspeakable unity. The solemn words which shine like stars—starlike in that their height above us shrinks their magnitude and dims their brightness, and in that they are points of radiance partially disclosing, and separated by abysses of unlighted infinitude—tell us that in the order of eternity, before creatures

were, there was communion, for "the Word was with God," and there was unity, for "the Word was God." And in the records of the life manifested on earth the consciousness of unity loftily utters itself in the unfathomable declaration, "I and My Father are one;" while the consciousness of communion, dependent like ours on harmony of will and true obedience, breathes peacefully in the witness which He leaves to Himself, "The Father has not left Me alone, for I do always the things that please Him."

The resurrection was the transition from the state of humiliation and limitation; and by it Jesus enters, in His manhood, on the possession of that "glory which He had with the Father" from eternity. In these mighty words, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," He stretches out the hand that had been pierced with the nails, and shows us that it holds the "unlimited sceptre which His almighty Father has bequeathed Him." It had been His from everlasting, but now His humanity is crowned, and the resurrection is the first step in the glorification of the body of His humiliation. The man Jesus rules the universe. Whatever unknown orders of being and forms of power may fill the heavens, He is their king. Whatever rebellious or unconscious forces may storm on earth, He controls them. There is no power but of God, and all God's power belongs to the Man who died and rose again. The kingdoms of nature, of providence, of grace, and of glory, are His. Thus, deep and broad and firm He lays the foundations for our trust, peace, obedience and hope. If all power be His, none can be against His friends. If He has all power, we need not fear, though we have all weakness. A. M.

As we study, with spiritual eyes, into the Saviour's divinity, one after another new points of light, new traits of love, new features of blended majesty and tenderness, gleam out upon our gratitude. We have only to look to find. The heart's matchless telescope is simple, childlike faith. And every spot of common life where Providence plants our feet is an observatory—if we will but stand in it looking upward, devoutly upward—lofty enough for the whole sweep of that condescending heaven. F. D. H.

Everlasting Father. Father of eternity, because it is He that gives substance and body to the conception of infinite duration. Duration implies something that endures. Now God is the Being who, having neither beginning of days nor end of years, gives to us the con-

crete meaning of the abstract statement. And to ascribe this attribute to the Messiah, to Him who is to be born as a child, is exactly in line with the rest of the marvellous prediction, and gives increased emphasis and meaning to the startling collocation of human qualities and divine in the future ruler of Israel. Born in time and seated on the throne of David, he is yet the Everlasting One, whose goings forth have been from of old, even from the days of eternity. Of the increase of His government there shall be no end, just because of His existence there has been no beginning. Whatever be the meaning of the phrase, the English translation should be "Father of eternity" in accordance with the ancient Arabic and the modern (Dr. Van Dyck's), the Syriac, ancient and modern, the Chaldee Paraphrase, the French of Martin and the Dutch of the States Bible. *Chambers.*

He is called by Isaiah **the Prince of Peace**. "Of the increase of His government and peace there is said to be no end." A little after, His reign is described by the most pacific emblems that imagination could furnish, by "the wolf dwelling with the lamb, and the leopard lying down with the kid." His work of righteousness is peace, and He makes with mankind the covenant of peace. He Himself tells His disciples that "in Him they were to have peace;" and it is the legacy He bequeaths them. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." The sacred writers continue the same language in the New Testament. "The kingdom of God is joy and peace." His Gospel is called "the Gospel of peace." *Bp. Porteus.*

The title Prince of Peace was indeed appropriate. How quiet and serene He was when tempests of passion were blowing and beating around and upon Him! How like a lamb He appeared in the midst of fierce and wolfish spirits! When His disciples proposed that fire from heaven should consume the Samaritans for their disrespect to their Lord, He rebuked their impatient tempers with the assurance that they were mistaking the design of His mission, which was not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. When He was reviled He reviled not again; when He was smitten He did not smite. When He was unjustly slain by wicked hands, no violence was in His hand, and no reproach in His mouth, but a dying prayer that His murderers might be forgiven. He illustrated, in His life and death, His own teachings, "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you, and do good to them that hate you, and

pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you." Was He not the Prince of Peace? Those, therefore, who *follow Him must follow peace*; they must cherish a meek and quiet spirit. R. T.

7. Of the increase of His government there shall be no end. The government or power thus to be enlarged is of course that of the *child*, who is described as born and given in the foregoing verse. A striking parallel is furnished by the prophecy in Micah 5 : 3. There, as here, a king is promised who should be the son of David, and should reign over all the earth in peace and righteousness forever. It is there expressed, and here implied, that this king should reunite the divided house of Israel, although this is but a small part of the increase promised, which includes the calling of the Gentiles also. The reign here predicted was to be not only peaceful, but in every respect prosperous. And this prosperity, like the reign of which it is predicted, is to have no limit, either temporal or local. It is to be both universal and eternal. There is nothing to preclude the very widest explanation of the terms employed. The endless increase of power and prosperity *on the throne of David* means of course that the Prince whose reign was to be thus powerful and prosperous would be a descendant of David. This is indeed a repetition and explanation of a promise given to David (2 Sam. 7 : 11-16 ; 1 K. 8 : 25) and repeatedly referred to by him (2 Sam. 23 : 1-5 ; Ps. 2, 45, 72, 89, 132). Hence the Messiah is not only called the *branch* or *Son of David* (2 Sam. 7 : 12, 13 ; Jer. 23 : 5 ; 33 : 15), but David himself (Jer. 30 : 9 ; Ezek. 34 : 23, 24 ; 37 : 24 ; Hos. 3 : 5). The two reigns are identified, not merely on account of an external resemblance or a typical relation, but because the one was really a restoration or continuation of the other. Both kings were heads of the same body, the one a temporal head, the other spiritual ; the one temporary, the other eternal. The Jewish nation, as a spiritual body, is really continued in the Christian Church. The subject of the prophecy is the reign of the Messiah ; the effect predicted, its stability and increase ; the means to be employed, judgment and justice ; the efficient cause, the zeal of Jehovah. Grotius distinguishes between *judgment* and *justice*, as denoting righteous government on one hand, and righteous subjection to it on the other. The justice spoken of is that of the Messiah and His subjects. All the acts of His administration will be righteous, and the effect of this upon His people will be right-

eousness on their part, and this prevalence of righteousness will naturally generate the increase and stability here promised. A.

Such is the tone of many other prophecies of the Messiah's reign. (See Ps. 2, 22, 72 and 110.) Isaiah elsewhere expands the same views of the magnificence, glory, purity, righteousness and peace of the Messiah's reign. (See chaps. 11, 49 and 60.) All these thoughts are grand and glorious. A reign so purely just, so benign, excluding from earth so entirely those great national sins which have been its curse for ages ; a reign destined to endure so long, evermore fraught with blessings to the filling of earth's cup ; what can be more magnificent ; what can more completely fill out the answer to the divinely prescribed prayer, " Thy kingdom come ; Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven " ? H. C.

There is no other influence in the world like that of living personality, and in Christ this is Divine. Amid the philosophic questionings and disputes of the ages there arises this unearthly figure, " the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace ! " Even the enemies of the cross feel His strange presence in the world. Less and less does candid unbelief know what to think of Jesus. Some of the most eloquent tributes to His unearthly purity have been given by writers who have beheld Him with wonder, though not accepting His salvation. History has made Him its moral centre ; the calendar of the nations begins with Him, and the date of His birth is the festival of the civilized world. Most of the sceptics of our time owe whatever is best in them to the culture of the Christian faith, and the most successful apologists for the false religions of the East are those who, as a result of early training, clothe them in a Christian nomenclature, and ennoble them with conceptions borrowed from the New Testament, and of which their own authors never dreamed. *Ellinwood.*

His life is connected with the whole structure of human history—with the life of man from the beginning, and with the life of man unto the end. It is He who was born at Bethlehem ; Himself in the lowliest penury, yet signal-stars and angelic choruses heralding and gracing His advent. It is He who was promised to the fallen pair in Eden, the seed of the woman who was to bruise the serpent's head. It is He who was foretold as about to dwell in the tents of Shem, enlarging them above the glory of Japhet. It is He concerning whom it was said to Abraham, beneath the numberless

stars of the eastern heavens, "In Him shall all the families of the earth be blessed." It is He of whom the patriarch Jacob did speak, when, like the dying swan, he broke into one and only strain of prophetic song: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, until the Shiloh, the Peacemaker, shall come, whom all the nations should obey." He it is concerning whom Balaam, the seer of Edom, with most reluctant testimony was compelled to predict as the Star and the Ruler who should come forth from Jacob. The same of whom Moses spake as the prophet whom the Lord God should raise up unto whom the world should hearken. It is He of whom David wrote in the Psalms, calling Him Lord, and King, the Son of God, the Christ, the anointed one, and the priest—now waking the echoes of the Mount of Olives, as with jubilant songs he described the splendors of His imperial reign and the glories of His triumphant and universal dominion—and now again, with plaintive measure, as with all minuteness he rehearsed His humiliations and sufferings, His betrayal by a false friend, the parting of His garments by lot, the piercing of His hands and feet, the pouring out of His soul like water, the entombment of His body, and its resurrection while yet uncorrupted by decay. It is He of whom Isaiah spake, as with lips touched with fire from heaven, and wrote with a pen dipped in the glories of the skies, as the Deliverer, the Saviour, the Redeemer, the tried and sure corner-stone, Immanuel, the Prince of Peace, the renovator of the world, the isles waiting for His law; a *child* to be born, yet bearing the name of the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father. It is He of whom Ezekiel wrote, by the river Chebar, as the glory of God, by whom the earth was to be made to shine. It is He of whom Daniel spake, as the Prince, the Messiah, who was to be cut off, but not for Himself, that He might make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness. Amos the herdsman foretold His coming as a Deliverer, and Micah rejoiced in His advent. Zechariah describes His royal Priesthood; Haggai anticipates His footsteps as the glory of the second Temple, the Lord our righteousness; and Malachi, prolonging the notes of this whole choir of prophecy, bids the world believe that the Messenger of the covenant is nigh at hand, and the Sun of Righteousness is soon to rise upon the benighted earth.

All the pregnant and germinant prophecies of Scripture relate to Him. The long procession of the centuries had been pointing to Him.

His precursors summon the world to make ready for His approach. When He was born, there was heard a company of angels chanting in the sky: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to man." When He spake unto men, He claimed to be the very being whom prophecy had promised, and Nature obeyed Him as her Lord. He challenged the faith of the world, when He styled Himself the way, the truth, and the life, predicting His own lifting up upon the cross as the appointed method of drawing all men unto Himself. Plainly, the historic events which occurred in and about Jerusalem eighteen hundred years ago were not unanticipated accidents. The life of Christ was a prepared and foretold certainty. A cheering fact is this with which to begin—the assured conviction that it was God's intention to redeem and restore our fallen race.

W. Adams.

An individual once trod on the earth who by moral omnipotence alone controlled other times and founded an eternity of His own: one who, soft-blooming and easily drawn as a sunflower, burning and attracting as a sun, still in His mild form moved and turned Himself and nations and centuries together toward the all-enlightening primal sun; it is that still spirit which we call Jesus Christ. The power by which this wonderful life of Jesus fed itself was wholly of the spiritual world. He lived in communion with the highest conceptions of virtue; He lived in intimacy with the infinite Father, or at least, as the unbeliever must admit, with a God who to Him was a reality; He had a deep theory of human nature in the ruin of its spiritual capacity, which, joined with His deeper love, moved Him to what He regarded as a life for man's redemption. And the result of His spiritual life and thinking has been the alteration of the world—changes which no laws, nor wars, nor arts could have effected. And by what instruments has He worked so mightily on human hearts and characters? By spiritual ones, by the feeling of guilt, the longing for purity and peace of soul, by offering pardon and the promises of life-giving assistance to the contrite, by a life and example of united love and holiness, by unveiling God and the soul's unending life. Such are the means by which He has set up His throne over mankind, pushing His sway beyond souls into everything which pertains to man. T. D. W.

Fifty-five generations have passed away, and there is no name which exercises such an influence in the world to-day as the name of Him who was lifted up on the cross. It is associ-

ated with the most advanced civilization ; with the best and most enduring literature ; with the noblest forms of art ; with the broadest systems of education ; with the most gigantic enterprises of commerce ; with the purest and most extended institutions of philanthropy ; with the most refined and healthful social progress ; and, in fine, with every element of dignity, prosperity and power among the nations of the earth. *Ebenezer P. Rogers.*—He said : "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." And they have not. Children learn them from mothers' lips. Strong men are made strong wholly by them. The afflicted find in them sole and sufficient comfort. They are rehearsed in the ears of the dying. They are said in hope and triumph by the open grave. Do what you will with His biography—travesty it with Strauss, dislocate it with Renan, use all the power of learning, genius, wit, sarcasm, malice to distort or dwarf its central figure—you cannot, by any possibility, bring Jesus Christ down to the level of ordinary humanity, into line with the men of His generation, or even into line with the great men of all times. He still has a name above every name, and you cannot take it away. His is the only character in history which has no secular parallax, which looks as great in the nineteenth century as in the first. *A. P. Peabody.*—If we look upon Him as Divine, if we believe that the power of God was resident in Him, then we should have a right to see an influence that never wanes, a voice that never stills, a fulfilment of all prophecies, an utter change in the fashion of the world's politics, science and its philosophy. And this is exactly what has occurred. *Anon.*

"The argument from prophecy" goes deeper than any isolated passages of the Old Testament. There was a Divine Life in that ancient history. Christ embodied His spirit and power in that progressive movement before He was incarnate in the manger. He was a *Life* in the ancient world, as well as a *Hope*, a veritable presence in history, and not simply a power overhanging it. He it was that rolled the cycles and progressions of history with His impulsion. Every tendency toward clearer light or better living was the earthly garment with which He clothed Himself. All those sequences of God's providence, which seem to be so contrary in direction to every human tendency, betray the presence of a supernatural force—His presence from behind. Though event after event and life after life seem natural enough when looked at one by one, yet in a

comprehensive survey they seem to be linked together as the orderly progression of some Divine design, and all facing on toward some far-off Divine result. This coherent and slowly evolving plan was the way in which Christ embodied Himself in the ages of preparation. This history, as the letters are put together, spells the adorable name of the Messiah. *Van Slyke.*

The history of the world would be the strangest of all riddles were it not the history of redemption. Nothing but the preparation for Christ's coming can explain the events before the incarnation, and nothing but a movement toward the final triumph of His kingdom can explain the history since He came. The events of all the ages find their light and law in Him. They centre in Him, and circle around Him. Like Moses and Elias in the transfiguration, they appear in His glory, and speak to Him of His decease. There is no other law of history than this, for there is no other philosophy of history which can expound the facts of history. *J. H. Seelye.*

From Him as its foundation, its leader, and its life, a new kingdom of heaven rises into existence, comes forth out of the mists and concealments and sensuous coverings of the Mosaic economy, arrayed in robes of love and compassion and faith and truth, breathing only glory to God, peace on earth, and good will to men. This, O fallen man, is our Christ, the Christ of prophecy, the Christ of history ; the living, reigning Christ whom we adore as divine, whom we love as the incarnation of all perfection, whom we believe in as the saviour of our souls from the power and penalty of sin. By His side, standing in childlike confidence, the law has no curse, death no sting, the grave no victory. Our life, hidden in His life and deriving from it new life, is purified, exalted, strengthened, comforted, protected and made victorious over all the powers of the world and the devil. In Him is the sacrifice for sin and the way of pardon and peace ; in Him is the power which will make the weak strong for the ascent up the narrow way of life ; in Him is light on all the dark scenes of time, light to scatter the gloom and darkness of the grave, light opening to us the secrets of immortality. Looking on Him in faith, I find all I want to elevate, purify, enlighten and save. In Him the mighty promises are all yea and amen. He is the captain of our salvation, leading us to glory. No wonder the four and twenty elders praise ; no wonder the saints on the sea of glass ascribe dominion and power and glory to Him ; no wonder heaven rings with the praises of the

Lamb in the midst of the throne ; no wonder martyrs and confessors have trusted Him and rejoiced in Him amid the fires ; no wonder His people in their sorrow and trials look to Him for comfort and joy ; no wonder sin-convicted souls, turning from the world, cry to Him for salvation ; no wonder poor penitents love Him who is the end of the law for righteousness. Here, O Christian, is your prophet, priest and king. Here, O sinner, burdened, tossed and uneasy, full of sad anticipations, is thy cure, thy comfort, thy Saviour ! *S. W. Fisher.*

Jesus ! How does the very word overflow with sweetness and light and love and life ; filling the air with odors, like precious ointment poured forth ; irradiating the mind with a glory of truths in which no fear can live, soothing the wounds of the heart with a balm that turns the sharpest anguish into delicious peace, shedding through the soul a cordial of immortal strength. Jesus ! the answer to all our doubts, the spring of all our courage, the earnest of all our hopes, the charm omnipotent against all our foes, the remedy for all our weakness, the supply of all our wants, the fulness of all our desires. Jesus ! at the mention of whose name every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. Jesus ! our power—Jesus ! our righteousness, our sanctification, our redemption—Jesus ! our elder brother, our blessed Lord and Redeemer. Thy name is the most transporting theme of the Church, as they sing going up from the valley of tears to their home on the mount of God ; Thy name shall ever be the richest chord in the harmony of heaven, where the angels and the redeemed unite their exulting, adoring songs around the throne of God. Jesus ! Thou only canst interpret Thy own name, and Thou hast done it by Thy works on earth, and Thy glory at the right hand of the Father. *Bethune.*

Estimates from Other Sources.

Byron, in view of the faultless life of the Redeemer : “ If ever man was God, or God man, Jesus Christ was both.” Rousseau : “ Can it be possible that the personage whose history the gospel contains should be a mere man ? What sublimity in His maxims ! What profound wisdom in His discourses ! If the life and death of Socrates are those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God.” Fichte, the noblest representative of recent pantheistic speculation in Germany, bore Christ the highest testimony it was possible for one man to bear another, making Him the propounder of his philosophy. Goethe, the universal genius of modern Germany, speaking of Christ, says,

“ He is the Divine Man—the Holy One.” Said Theodore Parker, in one of his most rigid discourses against evangelical religion, “ Try Christ as we try other teachers : how soon *their* pupils, though humble men, go beyond them ! Eighteen centuries have passed ; but what man or sect has mastered His thought ? He pours out to the world a doctrine beautiful as the light, sublime as heaven, and true as God.” And then, after arguing for some length that, though the Bible itself were destroyed, its great precepts would live, he falls into this strain : “ But we should lose (O irreparable loss !) the example of that character, so beautiful, so divine, that no human genius could have conceived, as none, after all the progress and refinement of eighteen centuries, seems fully to have comprehended, its lustrous life.” *L. T. T.*

It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which, through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love, and has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, natures, temperaments and conditions ; has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the highest incentive to its practice ; and has exercised so deep an influence, that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists. *Lecky.*

Speaking of those who deny the Trinity, James Martineau (in the prime of life) says : “ I am constrained to say, that neither my intellectual preference nor my moral admiration goes heartily with their heroes, sects or productions of any age. Ebionites, Arians, Socinians, all seem to me to contrast unfavorably with their opponents, and to exhibit a type of thought and character far less worthy, on the whole, of the true genius of Christianity. I am conscious that my deepest obligations, as a learner from others, are in almost every department to writers not of my own creed. In philosophy I have had to unlearn most that I had imbibed from my early text-books, and the authors in chief favor with them. In biblical interpretation, I derive from Calvin and Whitby the help that fails me in Crell and Belsham. In devotional literature and religious thought, I find nothing of ours that does not pale before Augustine, Tauler and Pascal. And in the poetry of the Church it is the Latin or the German hymns, or the lines of Charles Wesley, or of Keble, that fasten on my memory and heart, and make all else seem poor and cold. That I find myself in

intellectual accordance with the Socini, or Blaudrata, or Servetus in one cardinal doctrine—and that a doctrine not distinctively Christian, but belonging also to Judaism, to Islam, and to simple Deism—is as nothing compared with the intense response wrung from me by some of Luther's readings of Paul, and by his favorite book, the 'Theologia Germanica.'"

For "Admissions of Sceptics," see Vol. I. N. T., p. 599. B.

ISAIAH, CHAPTERS IX. 8—21; X.

9:8, 9 THE Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel. And all the people shall know, *even* Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria, that say in pride and in stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen, but we will build with hewn stone; the sycomores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars. Therefore the LORD shall set up on high against him the adversaries of Rezin, and shall stir up his enemies; the Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

13 Yet the people hath not turned unto him that smote them, neither have they sought the LORD of hosts. Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, palm-branch and rush, in one day. The ancient and the honorable man, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. For they that lead this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed. Therefore the Lord shall not rejoice over their young men, neither shall he have compassion on their fatherless and widows: for every one is profane and an evil-doer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

18 For wickedness burneth as the fire; it devoureth the briers and thorns: yea, it kindleth in the thickets of the forest, and they roll upward in thick clouds of smoke. Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land burnt up: the people also are as the fuel of fire; no man spareth his brother. And one shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm: Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: and they together shall be against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

10:1 Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and to the writers that write per-
2 verseness: to turn aside the needy from judgement, and to take away the right of the poor of my people, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey!
3 And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from
4 far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory? They shall only bow down under the prisoners, and shall fall under the slain. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

5, 6 Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few. For he saith, Are not my princes all of them kings? Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus?
10 As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?

12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he hath said, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the peoples, and have robbed their treasures, and I have brought down as a valiant man them that sit on

- 14 *thrones*: and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the peoples; and as one gathereth eggs that are forsaken, have I gathered all the earth: and there was none that moved the wing, or that opened the mouth, or chirped. Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if a rod should shake them that lift it up, *or* as if a staff should lift up *him that is* not wood.
- 16 Therefore shall the Lord, the LORD of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under 17 his glory there shall be kindled a burning like the burning of fire. And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and 18 his briars in one day. And he shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, 19 both soul and body: and it shall be as when a standardbearer fainteth. And the remnant of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them.
- 20 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and they that are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay 21 upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. A remnant shall return, *even* the remnant 22 of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, *only* a remnant of them shall return: a consumption *is* determined, overflowing with righteousness. 23 For a consumption, and that determined, shall the Lord, the LORD of hosts, make in the midst of all the earth.
- 24 Therefore thus saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: though he smite thee with the rod, and lift up his staff against 25 thee, after the manner of Egypt. For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall be 26 accomplished, and mine anger, in their destruction. And the LORD of hosts shall stir up against him a scourge, as in the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and his rod shall be 27 over the sea, and he shall lift it up after the manner of Egypt. And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall depart from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.
- 28 He is come to Aiath, he is passed through Migron; at Michmash he layeth up his baggage: 29 they are gone over the pass; they have taken up their lodging at Geba: Ramah trembleth; 30 Gibeah of Saul is fled. Cry aloud with thy voice, O daughter of Gallim! hearken, O 31 Laishah! O thou poor Anathoth! Madmenah is a fugitive; the inhabitants of Gebim 32 gather themselves to flee. This very day shall he halt at Nob: he shaketh his hand at the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.
- 33 Behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, shall lop the boughs with terror: and the high ones 34 of stature shall be hewn down, and the lofty shall be brought low. And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.

8. HAVING repeatedly interchanged the three great subjects of this prophecy—the deliverance of Judah from the power of Syria and Israel, its subsequent punishment by means of the Assyrians, and the reign of the Messiah, for whose sake the kingdom was to be preserved—the prophet passes here abruptly from the last to the first, and again predicts the punishment of Ephraim. He reverts to this event, which had already been repeatedly foretold, for the purpose of declaring that the blows would be repeated as often and as long as might be needed for the absolute fulfilment of God's threatenings. He begins by showing that Israel had already been sufficiently forewarned. *The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it came down into Israel.* The word which God had uttered against Israel had reached them as a message from Him, as a revelation, so that there could be no doubt as to its authority and genuineness. The two names of the patriarch

are here used as equivalents, denoting his descendants, and especially the larger part, the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, to which the national name *Israel* is wont to be distinctively applied.

10. The very words of the self-confident Ephraimites are now recorded. Instead of being warned and instructed by what they had already suffered, they presumptuously look for greater prosperity than ever. *Bricks are fallen, and hewn stone will we build; sycamores are felled, and cedars will we substitute.* The Oriental bricks are unburnt, so that most of their brick structures are as little durable as mud walls. The sycamore is durable, but too light and spongy to be used in solid building. The latter is accordingly contrasted with the cedar, and the former with hewn stone, the two most highly valued building materials. A.

12. "The adversaries of Rezin" were the Assyrians. They had already proved a for-

midable foe to Syria. With them the Lord would combine the old enemies of Israel, the Syrians on the north and the Philistines on the south and west; and then together they should devour Israel as with mouth wide open, to swallow her up. But as these sore national afflictions did not turn the people to God, so His anger did not turn away, but His hand remained still outstretched for yet other and sorer afflictions. So after each successive stroke, God is wont to pause and take note of the moral effect, if any, that He may by all means arrest the process of chastisement at the earliest moment when once the results of penitence and humiliation are secured. H. C.

13. *The people has not turned to Him that smote them, and Jehovah of Hosts they have not sought.* Sin is described in Scripture as departure from God. Repentance, therefore, is returning to Him. To seek God, in the idiom of Scripture, is to pray to Him (Isa. 55: 6), to consult Him (Isa. 8: 19), to resort to Him for help (Isa. 31: 1), to hold communion with Him (Amos 5: 4, 5). Hence it is sometimes descriptive of a godly life in general (Ps. 14: 2). So here it includes repentance, conversion, and new obedience. A.

13-16. Because the people would not turn to Him who smote them to heal and to restore, therefore He will cut off from Israel in one day the greatest and the least; the highest in society and the lowest; and by implication, all the intermediate classes also. The extremes are so described as to enhance the moral force of the threatening. None are too venerable in age or wisdom to be punished. The other extreme, being lowest by reason of their meanness in crime, can by no means be passed over. The head and the tail of the animal furnish the first figure; the palm-branch, lofty and magnificent, on the one hand, and the bulrush, sending up its slender stalk from foul marshes, on the other, supply the second. Applying the first figure, he makes the elders, men usually much respected, the head, but the prophet who teaches lies, the tail. This is of course the false prophet who pretends to bring messages from the Lord, but brings only lies. His meanness, hypocrisy and falsehood earn for him richly the disgrace and the curse which are here indicated.

17. Hypocrisy, bold evil-doing and outspoken impiety combine to show that the people are morally rotten—fearfully apostate from God in their whole heart and life. After the judgments pertaining to this series, the Lord waited only till He saw there was no returning

to a better life, and then resumed His inflictions. H. C.

19. The figure of a general conflagration is continued in this verse, and then exchanged for a literal description of the miseries produced by civil war. *In the wrath of Jehorah of Hosts, the land is darkened with the smoke—or heated by the flame—and the people is like food (or fuel) of fire—one another (literally, man his brother) they do not spare.* A.

It is the heavy burden of this song (verses 12, 17, 21), "For all this, His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still." They do nothing to turn away His anger; they do not repent and reform, do not humble themselves and pray; none answer God's calls nor comply with the designs of His providences, but they are hardened and secure. His anger therefore continues to burn against them and "His hand is stretched out still." The reason why the judgments of God are prolonged is because the point is not gained, sinners are not brought to repentance by them; "the people turn not to Him that smites them," and therefore He continues to smite them; for when God judges He will overcome; and the proudest, stoutest sinner shall either bend or break. H.

19-21. An awful picture is this, indeed, of the way in which the kingdom of Israel fell! An interregnum of nine years, a time doubtless of fearful anarchy, immediately preceded the reign of their last king Hoshea. It was then, probably, that this vial of judgment was poured out. Not only did the leading tribes in this northern kingdom arm against each other, Ephraim against Manasseh and Manasseh against Ephraim; but whenever this strife might subside, they both assaulted Judah. Of this Pekah was himself an instance. He had scarcely reached the throne by means of conspiracy and regicide, when he turned his arms against Judah. Remarkably, of the five last kings of Israel, four were usurpers, reaching the throne by conspiracy! This is a forcible comment on the statements made here in our text. H. C.

Chap. 10. The first four verses close the series of sins described and judgments threatened in the case of the kingdom of Israel. The remaining verses (5-34) treat of the Assyrian king, his pride, his ambitious aspirations, his advance to attack Jerusalem, and his utter destruction. This prophecy suggested that recorded in chap. 11, the magnificent results of which gave occasion to the song of praise in chap. 12. Taken together in their natural con-

nction, this series of prophecies is exquisitely grand and precious. H. C.

The prophet first completes his description of the prevalent iniquity, with special reference to injustice and oppression, as a punishment of which he threatens death and deportation by the hands of the Assyrians (verses 1-4). He then turns to the Assyrians themselves, God's chosen instruments, whom He had commissioned against Israel, to punish and degrade it, but whose own views were directed to universal conquest, to illustrate which the Assyrian himself is introduced as boasting of his tributary princes and his rapid conquests, which had met with no resistance from the people or their gods, and threatening Judah with a like fate, unaware of the destruction which awaits himself, imputing his success to his own strength and wisdom, and glorying, though a mere created instrument, over his maker and his mover (verses 5-15). His approaching doom is then described under the figure of a forest suddenly and almost totally consumed by fire (verses 16-19). This succession of events is to have the effect of curing the propensity to trust in man rather than God, at least among the elect remnant who survive; for though the ancient promises of great increase shall certainly be verified, only a remnant shall escape God's righteous judgments (verses 20-23). To these the prophet now addresses words of strong encouragement, with a renewed prediction of a judgment on Assyria similar to that on Midian at Oreb and on Egypt at the Red Sea, which is then described, in the most vivid manner, by an exhibition of the enemy's approach, from post to post, until he stands before Jerusalem, and then, with a resumption of the metaphor before used, his destruction is described as the prostration of a forest—trees and thickets—by a mighty axe (verses 24-34). It is commonly agreed that the close of the chapter relates chiefly, if not wholly, to the destruction of Sennacherib's army, recorded in chap. 37:36.

The division of the chapters is in this part of the book peculiarly unfortunate; the first part of the ninth (verses 1-7) containing the conclusion of the eighth, and the first part of the tenth (verses 1-4) the conclusion of the ninth.

1-4. In these four verses, as in the different divisions of the ninth chapter, there is an accusation followed by a threatening of punishment. The sin denounced in the first two verses is that of oppression and injustice. The punishment threatened is desolation by a foreign foe, and its effect, captivity and death.

Woe unto them that decree decrees of injustice, and that write oppression which they have prescribed. A.—Wickedness is doubly aggravated when framed into law, because its mischief is made to fall on the poor and unprotected classes; because it affords a temptation to cruel, heartless men to oppress, providing for them the means of doing so with impunity; and because its mischiefs are more permanent. H. C.

3. The wicked rulers are themselves addressed, and warned of an approaching crisis, when they must be deprived of all that they now glory in. *And (though you are now powerful and rich) what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the ruin (which) shall come from far?* The questions imply negation, as if he had said, "You can do nothing to protect yourselves."

5. The Assyrian is now distinctly brought into view as the instrument which God would use in punishing His people. But instead of simply executing this task, the Assyrians would seek their own ends and exceed their commission, and for this they must themselves be punished. The prophet begins, therefore, with a woe against them. *Woe unto Asshur (the Assyrian or Assyria itself), the rod of My anger, and the staff in their (the Assyrians') hand is My indignation—i.e., its instrument.* A.

7, 8. Such a commission from God, however, is far from the thoughts of the Assyrian king. He will ascribe the whole series of his conquests to his own prowess and wisdom alone. Carchemish and Calno on the Euphrates and Tigris, Arpad and Hamath on the Orontes, Damascus and Samaria on the route southward toward Jerusalem, would fall in succession, and some had already fallen. His pride would grow with every victory. Each past conquest would be viewed as a pledge of further triumphs. *Birks.*

The Assyrian committed crime in his invasion; yet he thereby worked out the results which God intended. In the commission of his crime he was perfectly free and perfectly accountable; yet this crime was not only foreseen, but, as we observe, *predicted* by the Almighty. God was not the author of the sin, though the sin occurred providentially; and, foreseeing this, God recognizes His accountability, and denounces punishment (verse 12), "Wherefore it shall come to pass that when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks."

If we do not recognize this intervention of Providence in regard to the free acts of creatures, we can never interpret those judgments of God which are wrought by wicked men. Even the free actions of the most wicked man are so governed that his way is not in himself, but in God. J. W. A.

10, 11. The Assyrian king boasted that he had subdued idol gods mightier than those worshipped in Samaria and Jerusalem; could he not therefore with the greatest ease subdue their inferior gods? At this time he had subjected Samaria and her gods; would he not do the same to Jerusalem and to her gods? H. C.

12. To the boastful speech of the Assyrian succeeds a prediction of his fate. Although he would be suffered to proceed still further in the work of subjugation, till he reached the very verge of Zion and the portals of Jerusalem, God had determined that the work should go no further, but be there cut short by the infliction of a signal vengeance on the selfishness and pride of the invader. By the destruction of Sennacherib's army, God may be said to have cut short the work of that invader, or to have cut short His own work by accomplishing His purpose of destruction, or to have cut short His own work of punishing His people by relieving them from danger.

15. In all this the Assyrian was but an instrument in God's hand, and his proud self-confidence is therefore as absurd as if an axe, or a saw, or a rod, or a staff should exalt itself above the person wielding it.

16-19. The Assyrian overthrow is now foretold under the figure of a vast forest conflagration. It would come direct from God Himself, and be terrible and complete. Not only the rank and file of His soldiers, but the mighty and the noble would perish. *Birks.*

17. The "light of Israel" is the living God, as the revealer of truth and author of blessings. Note also the tacit antithesis between the relations of Jehovah to Israel, and to His enemies; to the former a light in the sense of a joy and a fountain of blessings; to the latter a light in the sense of a consuming fire. H. C.—The inner essential connection of wrath with the Divine holiness is made especially clear by this passage: "The Light of Israel becomes a fire, and His Holy One a flame, which burns and consumes His thorns and briers." Because wrath is a manifestation of Divine holiness, the occasion of its outburst does not lie in a capricious Divine humor or natural malignity, as the gods of the heathen fall into a passion, but wholly in the person smitten by it. If man

denies and rejects the testimony of the holy God which was given to him, justice must be executed upon him in his resistance to God's will, which alone is in the right, by his being reduced to his own nothingness. Breach of the covenant, and the malignant interference with the aim of the covenant, are the offences that chiefly kindle the Divine wrath. O.

20. The name of the prophet's son, Shear-jashub, "a remnant shall return," after being a sign and wonder in Israel more than forty years, will at length be fulfilled. After the great Assyrian overthrow, this remnant will cleave to the Lord with true repentance and living faith. Judgments, in which multitudes will be consumed, are decreed and sure; but not less certainly this remnant will be spared, and will return, in faith and humility, to the God of Israel. And, however numerous the people may be, it will be a remnant only; while sore vengeance will light on all the apostates throughout the land of promise. *Birks.*

21. The remnant spared through these fearful judgments now return penitently to their God. The words are the same which had become memorable in the name of Isaiah's son, *Shear-jashub, a remnant shall return.* Their significance was exceedingly precious. In the progress of the Lord's discipline and judgment upon His people, there will be some points where they are brought low and reduced to a very few. Yet then, this promise ever abiding, will be their comfort and hope. A remnant will survive and will return to the mighty God.

22, 23. In Rom. 9:27, 28 Paul quotes this passage in an argument to show the Jews that a large portion of their nation were then doomed to be rejected and destroyed for their unbelief, and that the way would thus be opened for bringing Gentile nations into the Christian Church. The latter point was then incidental, and not embraced originally in the words of Isaiah. The judgments which cut off myriads of the unbelieving Jews were a remarkable fulfilment of the general doctrine of this passage. It has been fulfilled often. H. C.

24. In verse 19, having declared the fate impending over the Assyrian, the prophet turned aside to describe the effect of their destruction on the remnant of Israel, and now resumes the thread of his discourse as if there had been no interruption. *Therefore* (since this is soon to be the fate of the Assyrians) *be not afraid, oh My people inhabiting Zion, of Asshur* (or the Assyrian). A.

26. Such are God's judgments on Assyria. Two historical cases set forth their fearfulness

—the slaughter of Midian before Gideon's small but chosen band, and the perishing of Egypt's hosts in the Red Sea. The rock of Oreb is specially named because two kings of Midian fell there, as Sennacherib was to fall in his idol temple after his return home from the ruin of his vast army. H. C.

28. From the time of the Assyrian's overthrow the prophet now reverts to that of his invasion, which he describes in the most vivid manner by rapidly enumerating the main points of his march from the frontier of Judah to the gates of Jerusalem. The language is precisely that of an eye-witness describing at the moment what he actually sees. *He is come to Aiath—he is passed to Migron—to Michmash he intrusts his baggage.* Although the form *Aiath* nowhere else occurs, it is commonly supposed to be the same with *Ai*, the ancient royal city of the Canaanites, destroyed by Joshua (Josh. 8 : 1), and afterward rebuilt (Ezra 2 : 28). *Michmash* is still in existence under the almost unchanged name of Mukhmas, to the northeast of Jeba, on the slope of a steep valley. The place is now desolate, but exhibits signs of former strength, foundations of hewn stone and prostrate columns (see Vol. III., p. 289). Thus far he has described what the Assyrians themselves do : they cross the line at Ajath—pass through Migron—leave their baggage at Michmash—lodge at Geba. Now he describes what the places themselves do : *Ramah trembles—Gibeah of Saul flees.* Ramah was a city of Benjamin, near Gibeah, but farther from Jerusalem. It is still in existence as *Er-ram*, about half a mile nearly due west of Jeba, but hidden from it by intervening heights. It is two hours north of Jerusalem, on the eastern side of the road to Nablus. *Ramah trembles* (or *is afraid*) at the enemy's approach, a strong and beautiful personification, or the place may be simply put for its inhabitants, as in the Targum. The trembling and flight of these towns is naturally represented as occurring while the enemy was resting at Geba. It may imply either that ramah was not in the direct line of the march, but within sight and hearing of it, or, on the contrary, that it was the next place to be reached, and trembling in apprehension of it. A still stronger metaphor is used as to the next place. *Gibeah of Saul*—so called because it was his birthplace and residence, and to distinguish it from others of the same name—*is fled.* There is here a rapid but marked climax. While Ramah trembles, Gibeah flees.

30. To terror and flight he now adds an audi-

ble expression of distress, representing one place as crying, another as listening, and, according to some writers, a third as responding. At the same time he exchanges the language of description for that of direct personal address.

32. This verse conducts him to the last stage of his progress, to a point so near the holy city that he may defy it thence. *Yet to-day in Nob* (he is) *to stand* (and there) *will he shake his hand* (a gesture of menace and defiance) *against the mountain of the house* (or daughter) *of Zion* (i.e., Mount Zion itself, the hill of Jerusalem. Nob was a sacerdotal city of Benjamin near Anathoth (Neh. 11 : 32), and, according to the Talmud and Jerome, within sight of Jerusalem. A.

33, 34. The picture of the forced march is complete. But now the scene suddenly changes. The middle steps of the campaign are omitted, and the prophet describes the catastrophe. The proud king vaunted that he had put down princes like a mighty hero ; and by one far mightier than himself he must be suddenly brought low, by the destroying angel of God. *Birks*—In bold, poetic imagery these verses give the final catastrophe ; the wondrous and thrilling fact that just when the great Assyrian army lay within sight of the temple spires, then “the angel of the Lord went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand men, and when they arose in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses” (Isa. 37 : 36). Such was the slaughter on that one awful night ! The prophet, conceiving of this Assyrian host as a forest of towering cedars of Lebanon, sees the Lord Jehovah of hosts come down with His great iron death-weapon to lop the boughs terribly, to hew down the loftiest cedars and lay low the proudest—cutting down all the thick undergrowth with His iron blade, and causing Lebanon with all its glory to fall before His mighty arm. Whether we suppose angelic agency or not, here is the great and dreadful God sweeping down the myriad hosts of Assyria before His uplifted arm. But yesterday, they were moving on proudly, even as Lebanon lifts up her lofty head and glories in her cedars ; to-day their camp is strewn with corpses of the fallen dead, for this proud king had hurled defiance at the city and temple of the Lord, and He had taken up the challenge and hurled back His shafts of death into that Assyrian camp ! The work is done, and the city and people of the great God are safe ! H. C.

ISAIAH, CHAPTERS XI., XII.

11 : 1 AND there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit : and the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD ; and his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD : and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears : but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth : and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together ; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed ; their young ones shall lie down together : and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the basilisk's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain : for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the root of Jesse, which standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek ; and his resting place shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall remain, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and they that vex Judah shall be cut off : Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. And they shall fly down upon the shoulder of the Philistines on the west ; together shall they spoil the children of the east : they shall put forth their hand upon Edom and Moab ; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea ; and with his scorching wind shall he shake his hand over the River, and shall smite it into seven streams, and cause men to march over dryshod. And there shall be an high way for the remnant of his people, which shall remain, from Assyria ; like as there was for Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

12 : 1 And in that day thou shalt say, I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD ; for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation ; I will trust, and will not be afraid : for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and song ; and he is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the peoples, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD ; for he hath done excellent things : let this be known in all the earth. Cry aloud and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion : for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

Chap. 11. The glorious truth which links this chapter to the preceding one is well expressed under this figure. God's enemies fall like forest trees, never to rise again ; but God's people, cut down, spring up again with new vigor and a more heavenly growth. Assyria's proud cedars fall with a fearful and final crash ; but the tree of David, though cut back to the stump of Jesse, starts again for a nobler life. A Divine vitality is in it. The cause of God can never die ! Such is the law of contrast which engrafs this chapter so beautifully upon

the closing sentence of the last. A rod out of the stem (stump) of Jesse springs up ; it proves to be a most extraordinary personage, none other than the oft and long-promised Messiah. We have His intrinsic qualities of wisdom, knowledge and piety ; His intuitive discernment and appreciation of character ; the perfect justice of His administration ; the fraternal peace and love which consequently ensue ; the knowledge of the Lord pervading the earth and excluding sin and evil from His realm. This rod of Jesse becomes a rallying point for the

nations ; they come to Messiah's feet ; His resting-place and home in this wide earth become all glorious. The people of God wander in captivity no more. His dispersed ones are regathered ; they live in mutual love, and no more in jealous rivalry ; they combine against their common foes ; the Lord is with them in glorious help for victory as of old in His miracles of power, and Zion, everywhere triumphant, reposes under the sheltering wing of her Redeemer. There can be no doubt that this description sets forth the great Messiah's reign ; that the rod from the stem of Jesse is Jesus the son of David. Every attempt to interpret the passage otherwise must needs confront the whole array of Messianic prophecies, explaining them all away, or denying their validity and inspiration ; must make the great points affirmed here nugatory and ignore their apt and perfect fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth. In other words, the Messianic interpretation of this chapter is fully sustained by the tenor of all other Messianic prophecies. The points made here apply to no one else—never have been or can be fulfilled in any other than the Messiah.

H. C.

This chapter is occupied with promises of restoration and deliverance, external safety and internal peace, to God's own people, as contrasted with the ruin previously threatened to their enemies. Borrowing his imagery from the fall of the Assyrian forest, just before predicted (10 : 34), the prophet represents a shoot as springing from the prostrate trunk of Jesse, and invested by the Spirit of Jehovah with all the necessary attributes of a righteous judge and ruler (verses 1-4). The pacific effect of the Messiah's reign is then described by the beautiful figure of wild and domestic animals dwelling and feeding together, and of children unhurt by the most venomous reptiles ; to which is added an express prediction that all mutual injuries shall cease in consequence of the universal prevalence of the knowledge of Jehovah (verses 5-9). To these figures borrowed from the animal creation, the prophet now adds others from the history of Israel, but intended to express the same idea. The Messiah is here represented as a signal set up to the nations, gathering the outcasts of His people from all quarters, and uniting them again into one undivided body, free from all sectional and party animosities (verses 10-13). Under figures of the same kind, the triumph of the Church is then represented as a conquest over the old enemies of Israel, especially those nearest to the Holy Land ; while the interposition of God's

power to effect this and the preceding promises is vividly described as a division of the Red Sea and Euphrates, and a deliverance from Egypt and Assyria (verses 14-16). The evidently figurative character of some parts of this chapter seems to furnish a sufficient key to the interpretation of those parts which in themselves would be more doubtful. A.

1-10. So much of this prediction as relates to the personal character and qualities of the promised Prince found its counterpart in the just, the meek, the wise, the gracious, the loving, the holy Jesus of Nazareth. So much as relates to the principles that through the Messiah should transform society and rule the world was met in the doctrines and precepts of Christ. The conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity gave promise of the early realization of the whole of this glorious picture ; and, though that promise is yet delayed, all things are moving toward its consummation. With the growth of Christ's kingdom, the most hostile and noxious things shall be subdued ; the most incongruous elements of human society shall be harmonized ; bloody men, in disposition like the wolf, the leopard, the lion, the bear, deceitful men like the asp and the cockatrice, shall be changed in their nature to the spirit of a little child. There is no reformer like the Gospel ; it is the kingdom of Christ, filling the earth, that will bring peace and good-will to men. J. P. T.

It was not by chance that the Messiah appeared, not in Egypt in the days of Pharaoh, nor in Nineveh, or Babylon, or Greece, or Rome, but among the Jewish people, who alone were prepared for His advent. Admit the historic reality of the Divine revelations recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures, and we see at once *how* the way for the Saviour's advent was prepared, and *why* He was of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. Deny the historic reality of these preparatory revelations, and we have a mystery, but not one of Divine origin. It is simply a man-made mystery, created in the interest of those who have decided beforehand that the true supernatural is an impossibility, and that, accordingly, its existence anywhere in the line of human history must be stoutly denied in the face of all possible evidence. But the impossibility of the attempt to dis sever the revelations of the New Testament from the preparatory revelations of the Old appears most clearly when we consider the *explicit declarations* of our Saviour, and, after Him, of His apostles, on this point. If we know anything whatever concerning the teachings of our Lord, we know that He constantly affirmed that He had come

in accordance with the prophecies of the Old Testament. *E. P. Barrows.*

1. The figure of the preceding verse is continued, but applied to the downfall of the house of David and the Jewish State, which is contrasted with the downfall of Assyria. The Assyrian forest was to fall forever, but that of Judah was to sprout again. *And there shall come forth a twig (or shoot) from the stock (or stump) of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall grow.* The only application of the passage that can be sustained is that to Jesus Christ, who sprang from the family of Jesse when reduced to its lowest estate, and to whom alone the subsequent description is literally applicable. It is enough to know that the fact of Christ's descent from David is not only repeatedly affirmed, but constantly presupposed in the New Testament, as a fact too notorious to be called in question or to call for proof. A.

A rod out of the stem of Jesse. We shall lose much of the force of the expression unless we refer to the verses immediately preceding. The prophet has just been speaking of the fall of the mighty trees of Lebanon. These trees, which symbolize Assyria, are to be cut down. They are cedars, the grandest of all the daughters of the forest. But the cedar, when once cut down, never springs up again. It belongs to the *Coniferae*, the cone-bearing family, including all the pines and firs; and none of these (with the exception of one or two species, like the canary pine, unknown in Europe or Asia) are capable of sending up shoots, when once they have been hewn down to the ground. Hence "to cut down like a cedar" signifies to destroy without hope of resurrection. Here, in contrast with the monarch of Lebanon, cut down never to rise again, is contrasted, in the first verse, the lowly vine of Judah, from which, though now pruned down to the very root, shall spring a vigorous branch. No plants can offer a greater contrast in appearance and treatment than the cedar and the vine. The vine, low and inconspicuous, scarcely lifting itself above the ground, unlike the towering cedar, dependent upon external support to rise at all. But its whole value depends upon its being systematically cut back, "pruned that it may bear more fruit." In the Holy Land, the vine is not even trellised, as in Italy. Every year the whole of the young wood is cut back to the stump, which alone remains, and is said to remain and to throw out vigorous branches for successive centuries, without any renewing of the plant. Thus from the vine-plant of Jesse, now by captivity cut down to the very root, a

Branch shall spring. The word is not that usually translated "branch," but has a special force, meaning a brilliant or shining bough, as though to imply it surpassed all others in beauty, while the passage should be translated more literally, as in the Revised Version, "A branch out of his roots shall bear fruit;" the Hebrew word being that from which *Ephra-thah*, the title of Bethlehem, is formed—that is, "the fruitful." *Tristram.*

2. The person whose origin and descent are metaphorically described in the preceding verse is here described by his personal qualities as one endowed with the highest intellectual and moral gifts by the direct influences of the Holy Spirit. *And upon him shall rest the Spirit of Jehovah, a Spirit of wisdom and understanding, a Spirit of counsel and strength, a Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah.* The only person in whom the terms of this prediction have been verified is Jesus Christ, whose wisdom displayed itself in early life and is expressly ascribed to a special Divine influence; who proved Himself a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart; whose ministry was not only characterized by fortitude and boldness, but attested by miracles and mighty deeds; whose knowledge of Divine things far surpassed that of all other men; and who was Himself a living model of all piety. A.

The precise thought here is that the Spirit of the Lord, resting upon Jesus the Messiah, will cause Him to have wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and piety. His perfect endowments for ruling well are to be ascribed to the Spirit of God, which dwelt in Him without measure. That the Divine Spirit was thus given to Jesus Christ is the doctrine both of Old Testament prophecy and of New Testament history. In Isa. 61:1 the Messiah Himself says (prophetically), "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me," etc., which prophecy Jesus read publicly in the synagogue and applied it, saying, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:17-21). Of this fact John the Baptist also is a special witness (John 1:32 and 3:34), testifying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him." "For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." H. C.—The resulting character of the Messiah is a fair picture of one who realizes the very ideal of a strong and righteous ruler of men. "Wisdom and understanding" refer mainly to the clearness of intellectual and moral insight; "counsel and might," to the qualities which give sound practical direction and vigor to fol-

low, and carry through, the decisions of practical wisdom ; while " the knowledge and fear of the Lord " define religion by its two parts of acquaintance with God founded on love, and reverential awe which prompts to obedience. The fulfilment, and far more than fulfilment, of this ideal, is in Jesus, in whom were " hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," to whom no circumstances of difficulty ever brought the shadow of perplexity, who always saw clearly before Him the path to tread, and had always " might " to tread it, however rough, who lived all His days in unbroken fellowship with the Father and in lowly obedience. The prophet saw not all the wonders of perfect human character which that indwelling spirit would bring to realization in Him ; but what he saw was indispensable to a perfect king, and was, at all events, an arc of the mighty circle of perfection which has now been revealed in the life of Jesus. The possibilities of humanity under the influence of the Divine Spirit are revealed here no less than the actuality of the Messiah's character. What Jesus is, He gives it to His subjects to become by the dwelling in them of the Spirit of Life which was in Him. A. M.

3-5. The glory of this kingdom is conspicuous in the principles by which it is administered. Of this Prince it is truly said, " Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins." The sceptre of His dominion is grace ; grace displayed in the Gospel, grace communicated by the Spirit, is the grand instrument of maintaining His empire. He reveals His glory and imparts His benefits, and thereby attaches His subjects by ties at once the most forcible and the most engaging. A lovely assemblage of qualities characterizes the spirit and genius of His Divine administration ; an incomparable majesty, united to a most endearing condescension—a spirit of benignity, joined to impartial justice, distinguishes His conduct. Though the subjects of this kingdom are admitted to it on no other condition than the cordial approbation of the character of the Prince, they are not left lawless or uncontrolled ; the revelation of the Divine will is imparted ; the most perfect measure of holiness and rules of conduct are enjoined on the conscience and impressed on the heart. This administration exhibits throughout a beautiful model of the moral government of God, attuned to the state of creatures who have fallen from their original rectitude, but are under a dispensation of mercy. R. Hall.

4. The Messiah, as a righteous judge, is now

exhibited in contrast with the unjust magistrates of Judah, as described in chaps. 1 : 23 ; 10 : 2 ; 5 : 23. A.—Here, as elsewhere, the glory of Messiah's reign lies, not in its external pomp and splendor, not in its parade and display, not in the magnificence of its surroundings, nor in any of those arts that minister to beauty and taste, but in its intrinsic and perfect justice ; in protecting the defenceless ; in fulfilling the sublime ends of all good government, human or Divine—viz., to secure the highest possible well-being by putting down injustice and oppression, and by guarding sacredly the equal rights of all. H. C.

6, 7. Here, as in chaps. 2 : 4 and 9 : 5, 6, universal peace is represented as a consequence of the Messiah's reign, but under a new and striking figure. A.—The entire drift of thought both before and after these verses (6-8) is of moral and not of physical changes ; pertaining to the influence of wise and righteous government over moral agents (verses 3-5), and to the renewing influence of knowing God (verse 9). Hence, if we construe this passage (verses 6-8) in harmony with the context, we shall make it figurative, representing a moral change in the hearts of men, somewhat analogous to the supposed change (understood literally) in the wolf, the lion, and the asp. Yet, again, these verses stand here to account for what immediately follows : " They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain ; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord." But the logical connection here, the reason why men no longer work evil in the earth, is *not* that lions eat straw ; is not that wolves dwell with lambs *literally* ; but *is* that the savage and ferocious spirit in man's bosom has turned to love, and that human selfishness is slain by the Gospel of Jesus. The true knowledge of God fills all the earth, and therefore man, made by creation intelligent and moral, and now by His second birth brought under the legitimate influence of knowing God, lives lovingly with all of human kind, even as the animal races might live harmlessly together, supposing them to have lost not only the instincts and the necessities of a carnivorous life, but even the power of subsisting upon animal flesh. But no amount of diffusion of the knowledge of God can literally change the digestive organs of the lion to live on straw. The logical connection of thought, therefore, and the nature of the case demand the figurative construction and forbid the literal. H. C.

9. The strong figures of the foregoing context are now resolved into literal expressions. *They* (indefinitely, men in general) *shall not*

hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, because the land is full of the knowledge of Jehovah (literally, of knowing Him), *like the waters covering the sea.* The first clause clearly shows that the foregoing description is to be figuratively understood. That the wolf and the lamb should lie down together means, in other words, that none should hurt or destroy in the Messiah's kingdom. This passage is descriptive of the reign of the Messiah, not at any one period, but as a whole. An historian, as Vitringa well observes, in giving a general description of the reign of David, would not use language applicable only to its beginning. The prophecy is therefore one of gradual fulfilment. So far as the cause operates, the effect follows, and when the cause shall operate without restraint, the effect will be complete and universal. It is not till the land *has been filled* with that knowledge, that men *will cease* to injure and destroy. A.—And since this description relates to the Gospel age and to the reign and manifestations of King Messiah, we must assume that the knowledge of God here contemplated is precisely that which comes to our world through Christ, revealing God. The idea, therefore, is that when they come under the power of such manifested love as shines forth in the Son of God living and dying, their hearts, moved and melted by such manifestations, will cease to love sin. They will no more hurt or destroy one another. H. C.

The wars and conquests of kings, the ambitious schemes of politicians, have all been overruled by Him who maketh the very wrath of man to praise Him, for the wider extension and the more efficient establishment of His own Church. The very colossal power of the Roman Empire itself was made subservient to the process by which it was to be broken up, and the efficacy of its laws manifested in favor of the religion to which it was inveterately and specially hostile. Little did the Emperor Titus imagine that, while laying waste the Jewish kingdom, he was raising up from its very ruins a kingdom destined speedily to overshadow and overthrow his own empire, and lay his proud religion in the dust. The Roman sword, intent only on self-glorification and the pride of conquest, was wielded by the Almighty Arm to clear the way for the triumphant march of Christianity over every nation and kingdom; and though that sword was frequently turned against the Church, and wrought sad havoc among its members, yet each pruning, each shoot that it cut off, became a separate living vine, extending to other regions the blessings

of the Gospel. And in this way the Church grew and spread until now its range extends from sea to sea, and from the river even unto the ends of the earth. *Macmillan.*

10. The word rendered "root" means here a shoot springing up from the root. The same usage appears in Rev. 22 : 16, "I am the root, even the offspring of David." Both passages refer to the Messiah as born in the line of Jesse and David. An "ensign," properly a flag-pole or signal to be seen from far, is here supposed to be lifted up for a rallying-point and a trumpet-call to the nations to gather to this standard. The Gentiles come, not "seek" only, but *come* to it. "Seek unto it" implies an actual coming. The place of Messiah's home and throne where He *rests* is all glorious. The Hebrew puts it strongly—is *glory*. H. C.

Other landmarks sink below the horizon as the tribes of men pursue their solemn march through the centuries, but the cross on Calvary "shall stand for an ensign of the people, and to it shall the Gentiles seek." To proclaim that accomplished salvation, once for all lodged in the heart of the world's history, and henceforth forever valid, is our unalterable duty. The message carries in itself its own immortal strength. A living Saviour in the present, who works with us, confirming the word with signs following, is the source of our power. Not till He is impotent shall we be weak. The unmeasurable measure of the gift of Christ defines the degree, and the unending duration of His life who continueth forever sets the period, of our possession of the grace which is given to every one of us. He is ever bestowing. He never withdraws what He once gives. The fountain sinks not a hair's breadth, though eighteen centuries have drawn from it. Modern astronomy begins to believe that the sun itself by long expense of light will be shorn of its beams and wander darkling in space, circled no more by its daughter planets. But this Sun of our souls rays out forever the energies of life and light and love, and after all communication possesses the infinite fulness of them all. "His name shall be continued as long as the sun, all nations shall call Him blessed." Here then are the perpetual elements of our constant power, an eternal Word, an abiding Spirit, an unchanging Lord. A. M.

The day here is the future times of Messiah. He is called the root of Jesse, as one growing up from the roots of David's family, when cut down and deprived of its royal grandeur. The peoples or nations are the Gentiles, as 2 : 4 ; 8 : 9 ; 10 : 13, 14. The ensign is the standard

of a captain or military leader. Paul (Rom. 15:12) quotes the words as predicting the call of the Gentiles. They shall "seek unto Christ," consult Him as their oracle, and resort to Him as their heavenly Guide. The resting-place is often referred to the Church, where Christ dwells by His Spirit. But 1 Tim. 3:16 supplies a simpler and more emphatic meaning. Immanuel, God manifest in the flesh, would first be "preached unto the Gentiles," set up before their eyes as the standard whereto they should resort; then "believed on in the world," or widely accepted as their Oracle and Teacher; and lastly, "received up into glory." His resting-place would thus indeed be glorious, "the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3; 8:1). *Birks.*

The seat of His dominion is also the seat of His repose. The beneficent activity just described is wielded from a calm, central palace, and does not break the King's tranquillity. That is a paradox, except to those who know that Jesus Christ, sitting in undisturbed rest at the right hand of God, thence works with and for His servants. His repose is full of active energy; His active energy is full of repose. And that place of calm abode is "glorious," or, more emphatically and literally, "glory." He shall dwell in the blaze of the uncreated glory of God—a prediction which is only fulfilled in its true meaning by Christ's ascension and session at the right hand of God, in the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and into which He has borne that lowly manhood which He drew from the cut-down stem of Jesse. A. M.

11. As the gathering of the Gentiles to Christ is prominent in verse 10, so is that of the Jews in this verse 11, and *both* in verse 12. Thought of as scattered in their dispersions as of old over Egypt, Assyria, Chaldea, and other remote regions, the Lord restores them a second time as at the first from their captivity in Babylon, only that here the restoration and gathering are specially *unto Christ*. Both the case of the Gentiles and the whole drift of the chapter require this view of their restoration. In this list of countries, Egypt and Assyria come first as being the greatest hostile kingdoms known to the Jews of Isaiah's time. At the dispersion many Jews went to Egypt; the whole kingdom of the Ten Tribes were borne to Assyria. Pathros is the southern part of Egypt; Cush, mainly Ethiopia, including perhaps the Arabian Cush from which the African family of that name descended and emigrated. Elam was the largest province of ancient Persia. Shinar in-

cluded Babylon. Hamath lay on the north of Palestine, here comprehending Damascene Syria. "The islands of the sea" were the lands reached by crossing the Mediterranean, whether insular or continental. This enumeration of all the great countries known to the Jews of that age involves the idea of universality. Wherever they may be, the Gospel of the grace of God will find and restore them. H. C.

13. The envy of Ephraim revealed itself in two stages: first, as an internal feud in the nation of Israel, and next as bitter and open hostility against the Zion of God. Under David and Solomon we see the first, but under Pekah and Hoshea this second and worse stage. The first half of the verse predicts the end of foreign hostility and hatred; the second, that of internal strife and discord. Ephraim and Judah were guilty alike, and both needed a moral conversion. Ephraim, restored to the covenant of God, "shall not envy Judah," as it had done in the times of Gideon, David, and Solomon; and Judah, humbled by afflictions, "shall not vex Ephraim." The prominence here doubly given to the cure of Ephraim's jealousy refers us back to chap. 7:1-18, and shows the striking moral unity of these later messages in the time of Ahaz. *Birks.*

14. These were the nations nearest to the Israelites and most frequently in war against them during the ages of the judges and kings, even down to the times of Isaiah. But they are all long since extinct, and hence, if for no other reason, we are forbidden to think of a literal sense in this language. And this being of necessity figurative, the rest of the passage (verses 11-16) must be figurative also. H. C.

15. To the destruction of the enemies of Israel is added a prediction that all obstacles, even the most formidable, to the restoration of God's people, shall be overcome or taken away by His almighty power. This idea is naturally expressed by the dividing of the Red Sea and Euphrates, because Egypt and Assyria are the two great powers from which Israel had suffered and was yet to be delivered. A.

Chap. 12. Nothing could be more appropriate than to follow such a prophecy with a song of praise. Every impulse of the Christian inspires him to break forth in outbursts of song, ascribing glory, honor and praise to the blessed God for such deliverance to Zion, such triumphs to the kingdom of Christ, and such salvation to this lost world! Fitly and beautifully God's people are not only exhorted to sing and give praise, but the very words for their song are provided. In verses 1, 2, 6 Zion is personified

as if one person, of one heart and voice ; while in verses 4, 5, the plural number suggests that Christians do not lose their individuality, however much they blend their hearts and voices in the unison of praise. H. C.—The prophecy closes fitly with a song of praise, the utterance of restored Israel. And this links itself with the fivefold burden of the previous vision (chaps. 5 : 25 ; 9 : 12, 17, 21 ; 10 : 4) in a most impressive contrast. The hand of God, once stretched out in judgment, is now extended in mercy. His anger, once sore and heavy, is now turned away. The ceremony of drawing water from the pool of Siloam on the last great day of the Feast of Tabernacles would now receive a glorious antitype. *Birks.*

The structure of this psalm is very regular, consisting of two parts, in each of which the prophet first tells the people what they will say, or have a right to say, when the foregoing promises are verified, and then addresses them again in his own person and in the usual language of prediction. In the first stanza they are made to acknowledge the Divine compassion and to express their confidence in God as the source of all their strength, and therefore the rightful object of their praise (verses 1-3). In the second stanza they exhort one another to make known what God has done for them, not only at home, but among all nations, and are exhorted by the prophet to rejoice in the manifested presence of Jehovah (verses 4-6). A.

1. The Christian's heart will not complain that God *was* angry, since conscious sin gives so just cause for it. We could not love and honor God if He had not been offended with our former sins. But it is special cause for praise when after repentance God forgives, and turning His anger away, gives His loving and comforting smile instead. The "turning away" of His anger suggests that oft-repeated declaration (chaps. 9 : 12, 17, 21 and 10 : 4)—"For all this, His anger is *not* turned away, but His hand is stretched out still." "The former things have passed away."

2. Behold, God is my salvation. He shows this now most abundantly, and my soul shall believe it henceforth and forever. Now, therefore, I will trust, and will fear no more. So many promises have been fulfilled, I never can doubt His love and faithfulness again. For the Lord Jehovah is my *strength*, achieving all these great things for me. Truly, therefore, He shall be my song, the theme of my praise evermore ! H. C.

He reigns, O believer, for thee. The stability of His throne is thy safety. The administration

of His government is for thy good ; and the precious pledge is, that He "will perfect that which concerneth thee." In all thy troubles, and in all thy joy, commit thy way unto Him. He will guard the sacred deposit. Fear not that thou shalt lack any good thing. Fear not that thou shalt be forsaken. Fear not that thou shalt fall beneath the arm of the oppressor. "He went through the fires of the pit to *save* thee ; and He will stake all the glories of His crown to *keep* thee." Sing, then, thou beloved, "Behold, God is my salvation ; I will trust, and not be afraid ; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song ; He also is become my salvation." *J. M. Mason.*

Trust Him implicitly, submit to Him cheerfully, and you will find that all shall be well ; that more grace will be given you ; that the heavier the trial the larger will be the blessed measure of the strength. The Shepherd is leading you in the right way to His own blessed fold. Leave it all to Him. *Alexander McKenzie.*—The child cannot better secure any precious thing it has than by putting it into the father's hands to keep. Our mercies are always safest and surest when they are out of our hands and in the hands of God. We trust as we love, and we trust where we love ; where we love much we trust much ; much trust speaks out much love ; if we love Christ much, surely we shall trust Him much. *T. Brooks.*

3. The everlasting love of the Father, the rich grace of the Son, and the exuberant joy of the Holy Ghost compose these wells of salvation. Yet it is but one fountain of grace flowing from the unity of the Divine essence, and is communicated to us out of the fulness of the man Jesus. Hence we are invited by Him, "O friends, O beloved, drink ! yea, drink abundantly." *W. Mason.*

The connection of these words with the story in the Exodus was recognized by the Jews at a very early period, as is plain from their use in the remarkable ritual of the Feast of Tabernacles. That festival was originally appointed to preserve the remembrance of Israel's nomad life in the wilderness. In the later days of the nation a number of symbolical observances were added to those of the original institution. Daily, amid loud jubilations, the priests wound in long procession down the slope from the Temple to the fountain of Siloam in the valley beneath, and there drew water in golden urns. They bore it back, the crowd surging around them, and then amid the blast of trumpets and a tumult of rejoicing, they poured it on the altar, while thousands of voices chanted

Isaiah's words, "with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." So much for the occasion of the prophecy, now for its meaning and fulfilment. Nearly eight hundred years have passed. Again the festival has come round. For seven days the glad ceremonial had been performed. For the last time the priestly procession has gone down the rocky road; for the last time the vases have been filled at the cool fountain below; for the last time the bright water has been poured out sparkling in the sunlight; for the last time the shout of joy has risen and fallen, and as the words of the ancient chant were dying on the ear, a sudden stir began among the crowd, and from the midst of them, as they parted for His passage, came a young man, rustic in appearance, and there, before all the silence-stricken multitude, and priests with their empty urns, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." Surely such words in such a connection, at such a time, from such lips, are meant to point the path to the true understanding of the text. A. M.

With joy. Joy is the tuning the soul. The command to rejoice precedes the command to pray: "Rejoice evermore; pray without ceasing." Delight makes the melody; prayer else will be but a harsh sound. God accepts the heart only when it is a gift given, not forced. With joy we are to draw water out of the wells of salvation. Faith is the bucket, but joy and love are the hands that move it. God does not value that man's service who accounts not His service a privilege and a pleasure. *Charnock.*

True joy is a solid, grave thing, and dwells more in the heart than the countenance, whereas, on the contrary, base and false joys are but superficial. The deepest streams are the stillest. *Leighton.*—The elements of that joy which makes your whole life successful are consecration, self-revelation of character in all

that is pure and noble, having nothing in yourself which wishes to veil itself from the eyes of others; self-sacrifice and renunciation, benevolence in work and success in that beneficent work. These are the elements of true joy and prosperity on which you will look back with gladness from the end of life; on which you will look back with joy unspeakable and full of glory from the heights on high. *Anon.*

The Christian's joy is in every sense a joy of harvest; a joy of life in life's bountiful provision; a joy of the heart in the presence of the great Giver of all good; a joy of the honest laborer in the rewards of his own industry and the end of his patient waiting. *Interior.*

4. Starting afresh with the prolific theme of praise, the events of "that day"—blessings so great and rich—ye shall all say, Praise the Lord. Let all the nations know what He has done. *Remind* them (the sense of the last verb); remind them that His name is exalted, that He has glorified it by fulfilling so signally all His good words of promise to His people. H. C.

As to the authorship of the twelfth chapter, it is less necessary to insist on the external evidence, because the internal happens to be so strong; and it is less necessary to fall back on the possibility that Isaiah is quoting anonymous psalms, because the probability comes out so clearly that he composed the whole himself. The first eleven chapters are conceded to Isaiah by most modern critics. The testimony of the diction may be summed up by saying that Isa. 12 contains fifty words, of which forty are found in other passages of Isaiah generally acknowledged to be genuine. Of the remaining ten, eight are in the pre-exilic prophets. Of this same remaining ten, six are in psalms commonly considered pre-exilic; and of this same remaining ten, *all* are in the literature commonly considered pre-exilic. *W. H. Cobb.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTERS XIII., XIV. 1-27.

BURDEN OF BABYLON.

13:1 THE burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see.

2 Set ye up an ensign upon the bare mountain, lift up the voice unto them, wave the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles. I have commanded my consecrated ones, yea, I have called my mighty men for mine anger, even my proudly exulting ones.

4 The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people! the noise of a tumult

of the kingdoms of the nations gathered together ! the LORD of hosts mustereth the host for
5 the battle. They come from a far country, from the uttermost part of heaven, even the
6 LORD, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land. Howl ye ; for the
7 day of the LORD is at hand ; as destruction from the Almighty shall it come. Therefore
8 shall all hands be feeble, and every heart of man shall melt : and they shall be dismayed ;
pangs and sorrows shall take hold of *them* ; they shall be in pain as a woman in travail : they
9 shall be amazed one at another ; their faces *shall be* faces of flame. Behold, the day of the
LORD cometh, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger ; to make the land a desolation, and to
10 destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof
shall not give their light : the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall
11 not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for *their* evil, and the wicked for
their iniquity ; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the
12 haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more rare than fine gold, even a man than
13 the pure gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens to tremble, and the earth shall
be shaken out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce
14 anger. And it shall come to pass, that as the chased roe, and as sheep that no man gather-
eth, they shall turn every man to his own people, and shall flee every man to his own land.
15 Every one that is found shall be thrust through ; and every one that is taken shall fall by
16 the sword. Their infants also shall be dashed in pieces before their eyes ; their houses shall
17 be spoiled, and their wives ravished. Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which
18 shall not regard silver, and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. And *their* bows shall
dash the young men in pieces ; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb ; their
19 eye shall not spare children. And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chal-
20 deans' pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be
inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation : neither shall the
21 Arabian pitch tent there ; neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there. But
wild beasts of the desert shall lie there ; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures ;
22 and ostriches shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And wolves shall cry in their
castles, and jackals in the pleasant palaces : and her time is near to come, and her days shall
14 : 1 not be prolonged. For the LORD will have compassion on Jacob, and will yet choose
Israel, and set them in their own land : and the stranger shall join himself with them, and
2 they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the peoples shall take them, and bring them to
their place : and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants
and for handmaids : and they shall take them captive, whose captives they were ; and they
shall rule over their oppressors.

3 And it shall come to pass in the day that the LORD shall give thee rest from thy sorrow,
4 and from thy trouble, and from the hard service wherein thou wast made to serve, that thou
shalt take up this parable against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor
5 ceased ! the golden city ceased ! The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked, the sceptre
6 of the rulers ; that smote the peoples in wrath with a continual stroke, that ruled the nations
7 in anger, with a persecution that none restrained. The whole earth is at rest, *and* is quiet :
8 they break forth into singing. Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, *and* the cedars of Lebanon,
9 *saying*, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. Hell from beneath is
moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming : it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the
chief ones of the earth ; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.
10 All they shall answer and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we ? art thou become
11 like unto us ? Thy pomp is brought down to hell, *and* the noise of thy viols : the worm is
12 spread under thee, and worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O day star,
son of the morning ! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst lay low the nations !
13 And thou saidst in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the
stars of God ; and I will sit upon the mount of congregation, in the uttermost parts of the
14 north : I will ascend above the heights of the clouds ; I will be like the Most High.
15, 16 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the uttermost parts of the pit. They that see
thee shall narrowly look upon thee, they shall consider thee, *saying*, Is this the man that
17 made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms ; that made the world as a wilderness,
18 and overthrew the cities thereof ; that let not loose his prisoners to their home ? All the
19 kings of the nations, all of them, sleep in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art

cast forth away from thy sepulchre like an abominable branch, clothed with the slain, that are thrust through with the sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under foot. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, thou hast slain thy people; the seed of evil-doers shall not be named for ever. Prepare ye slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers; that they rise not up, and possess the earth, and fill the face of the world with cities. And I will rise up against them, saith the LORD of hosts, and cut off from Babylon name and remnant, and son and son's son, saith the LORD. I will also make it a possession for the porcupine, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the LORD of hosts.

The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulder. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?

THE BURDEN OF BABYLON, CHAPTERS
13-14: 27.

THE *first* series of Isaiah's prophecies (chaps. 1-12) is followed by a *second*, composed of *Burdens on the Gentile Nations* (chaps. 13-23), and summed up in a common sequel of judgment and blessing (chaps. 24-27). The two subjects of the first series are the impending Assyrian woe and the coming and reign of Immanuel, the branch of the Lord. The former is unfolded anew in these burdens themselves, and their sequel points again to the times of Messiah. The date of this second series lies between the third year of Ahaz and the third of Hezekiah, or between the fulfilment of the warning (chap. 8: 1-4) and the opening of the siege of Samaria, predicted (chap. 28: 2). During these sixteen years there seem to have been no direct inroads of Assyria on Ephraim or Judah, but it was extending and confirming its dominion over the surrounding heathen powers. The form of the prophecy corresponds. Burdens on the Gentile nations are successively revealed; and the message returns to Israel and to Judah, when the northern kingdom was ready to suffer once more under the Assyrian scourge. The arrangement has thus a clear basis in the history. The burden on Babylon takes precedence of the rest, since this was the Gentile power ordained to complete the predicted judgment of God on the chosen people. Next are the burdens of Philistia, Moab, and Damascus, the neighbors of Israel on the west, the east, and the north, with a brief sequel of their own. Next is the burden on Egypt and Ethiopia, the southern rival of Assyria. Then follow, as before, three secondary burdens on the border lands of the southern side. The message then

returns to Palestine, in the burden of the Valley of Vision; and the series ends with Tyre, the great maritime power of the ancient world. *Birks.*

The complete destruction of Babylon, and her desolation through long ages, is prophesied in Scripture repeatedly, and with a distinctness and minuteness that are very remarkable. The most striking of the prophecies are those contained in these two chapters and in Jer. 50: 10-15, 38-40; 51: 36-43. G. R.

The genuineness of the title, and the Isaian authorship of this first burden, have been denied by several modern critics (Justi, Gesenius, Rosenmüller, Hitzig, Knobel, Ewald, Davidson, etc.) on such grounds as these: 1. "The standpoint of the writer is in the time of the Captivity, when the Chaldean Empire was flourishing." On the contrary, it begins with the mustering of Median armies, and reaches on to a completed desolation, which has lasted to the present day. Or if the actual date be meant, that is fixed by the close (14: 25) before the fall of Sennacherib. 2. "Isaiah could not transfer his position into the distinct future, disregarding the horizon of his own day." This merely affirms that the Holy Spirit may predict events twenty or thirty, but not two hundred years beforehand. Besides, the political horizon of the time is kept in view, for a solemn oath of the Assyrian's fall closes the prophecy. 3. "The tone and spirit are bitter, revengeful, taunting, sarcastic. It is intelligible from one who had suffered under the Chaldeans, not from Isaiah." This is like one of the predicted "hard speeches" against the Lord of Hosts, whose message it is. The burden is not "bitter," but most solemn and sublime. It breathes not the feeble malice of Jewish exiles,

but the holy anger of the Most High, against the oppressors of His people and blasphemers of His great name. It is sarcastic, because it is the voice of Him who "scorneth the scorers, but giveth grace to the lowly." The vengeance is the same as in Rev. 18, given through the apostle of love. 4. "There are imitations of Ezekiel and Joel, and traces of acquaintance with Zephaniah." Between Jer. 50, 51 and Isa. 18 there is considerable likeness. There is here a strong proof of the genuineness, and no argument against it. It is easy to conceive that these later prophets might borrow phrases or images from one earlier and greater; but incredible that a vision so earnest and sublime, full of seraphic fire, should be a cento from three or four sources, turned into a forgery by prefixing a false name. 5. "The style and diction are unlike Isaiah's." On the contrary, there is no passage more characteristic of his style in the whole book. 6. "The prophecy was not fulfilled, as announced. The desolation did not take place by the Medes, as the prophecy asserts." The statement, and not the prediction, is untrue. To the Medes is assigned a fierce slaughter of the men of Babylon, when the city is captured; but how soon, or how slowly, or by what steps the total desolation would follow, of this the text says not a single word. The mention of shepherds and their flocks, and of tents of the Arabians, points to a time beyond the age of the Medo-Persian Empire. The reasons thus alleged from internal evidence, to disprove the genuineness, are all worthless. All the external evidence, and decisive reasons from the structure of the book, combine still further to prove that the vision is Isaiah's, and stands here in its proper place. *Birks.* (See *Bib. Sacra*, July, 1892, *Article on Isa.* 13.)

Hitzig says expressly that a prophecy against Babylon before the time of Jeremiah is impossible. This of course is tantamount to saying that prophetic inspiration is impossible. And this is, after all, the only question of importance. If there cannot be prophetic foresight, then of course a reference to subsequent events fixes the date of the writing which contains it. If, on the other hand, there is such a thing as inspiration and prophetic foresight, there is nothing to weaken the presumption created by a uniform tradition, the immemorial position of this prophecy, and the express terms of a title not less ancient than the text, of which, according to Oriental usage, it is really a part. The point at issue therefore between Christian and infidel interpreters has reference not to words

and phrases merely but to the possibility and reality of inspiration. Assuming this, we can have no hesitation in regarding the prophecy before us as a genuine production of Isaiah. . . . On the one hand, we have only to believe that Isaiah was inspired of God. On the other, we must hold that a writer of the very highest genius either personated the prophet or was confounded with him by the ancient Jews, and that this anonymous writer, whose very name is lost, without any inspiration, uttered a prediction which then seemed falsified by the event, but which has since been accidentally fulfilled! It is universally admitted that the thirteenth chapter, and the greater part, if not the whole, of the fourteenth, constitute a single prophecy. The division of the chapters is, however, not a wrong one. Both parts relate to the destruction of Babylon, setting out from God's decree and winding up with the threatening of total desolation. Chap. 14 is, therefore, not a mere continuation of chap. 13, but a repetition of the same matter in another form. The difference of form is chiefly this: that while chap. 13 is more historical in its arrangement, chap. 14 is dramatic, or at least poetical. Another point of difference is that in chap. 13 the downfall of Babylon is represented rather as an act of Divine vengeance, in chap. 14 as a means of deliverance to Israel, the denunciations of Divine wrath being there clothed in the form of a triumphant song to be sung by Israel when Babylon is fallen. A.

With chap. 13 commences a new series of prophecies, filling chaps. 13-23, described by the prophet himself as "burdens" and "woes"—i.e., predictions of calamity to come upon wicked nations for their great sins. This series opens with Babylon, the fall of which is the theme of chap. 13 and of chap. 14: 1-23. This prophecy of the fall of Babylon is very extraordinary in several respects.

1. In the point of its moral relations and bearings upon the Jews of Isaiah's time it stands remarkably disconnected. In chap. 13 there is not the least hint of any special relation to the Jews. But chap. 14 opens with a clear intimation of Divine mercy to Israel in restoring them to their own land after their captivity in Babylon, and also in reversing the recent relation of captor and captive between these two people, bringing Babylon under as Israel had been before. This assumes an ideal present far down into the period of the Captivity, the close of which was one hundred and ninety-two years after the death of Ahaz. The precise date of this prophecy against Babylon

is not given, but it stands in the collection among others of the time of Ahaz, and therefore probably belongs there legitimately. (See chap. 14 : 28.) Hence we have ground for making the interval between the prophet's actual and his ideal present, as above, nearly two hundred years. The facts revealed concerning the fall of Babylon have therefore no particular relation to the actual present of Isaiah's time.

2. Again, these predictions of the fall of Babylon make a strong case of a prophecy which to human view is built upon nothing. For Babylon was then entirely overshadowed by the great empire of Assyria. Who could see that Assyria was to go down, and this small city—then a province of Assyria and a third or fourth-rate power—to come up, to be queen of the nations? Besides, the prophet names the Medes as the conquering power, destined to subvert and supplant proud Babylon. But the Medes at this date were an unborn power. A rude people living on the southern and western shores of the Caspian Sea, who had made no mark yet in Asiatic history and had thrown out no foreshadowings of their future prowess; what mortal eye could see in them the future conquerors of great Babylon? And yet to heighten the complication of future events and put them still further beyond the possible reach of human sagacity, this Median power rose up somewhat suddenly about one hundred years after the writing of this prophecy, and *with the aid of Babylon* laid siege to Nineveh, captured and destroyed it, and thus subverted the great Assyrian empire, B.C. 625. These are the people named in this prophecy as the future conquerors of Babylon! Whose eye could foresee this, save the eye of God?

3. In point of style, this prophecy respecting Babylon stands unrivalled. The tone of chap. 13 is sublimely bold and graphic, yet even this is in some points surpassed by the exquisite poetic drapery of chap. 14. Throughout this chapter the Lord Himself may be considered the speaker. He gives command to unfurl the banner and to muster His hosts for the war against Babylon. The sound of their tramping squadrons is heard from far; they are seen coming; His instruments of vengeance—and His presence among them—for destruction to all that Chaldean land. He calls for wailing over a ruin so fearful; depicts the ensuing faintness of heart and pangs of agony. You see the stars fading out; the sun darkened in his going forth; men become few; the vast populations of great Babylon flee or die; the Medes appear by name as the Lord's executioners; and Baby-

lon, the glory of kingdoms, goes down to rise no more. Her very site is doomed to sterility and solitude, save as wild beasts gather there who are wont to make their homes in places most desolate. H. C.

2. The attack of the Medes and Persians upon Babylon is now foretold, not in the proper form of a prediction, nor even in that of a description, which is often substituted for it, but in that of an order from Jehovah to His ministers to summon the invaders, first by an elevated signal, and then as they draw nearer by gestures and the voice. *Upon a bare hill* (with a clear summit) *set up a signal, raise the voice* (shout or cry aloud) *to them* (the Medes and Persians), *and let them enter the gates of the* (Babylonian) *nobles*.

4. The prophet, in his own person, now describes the enemies of Babylon who had just been summoned, as actually on their way. He hears a confused noise, which he soon finds to be that of confederate nations forming the army of Jehovah against Babylon. *The voice of a multitude in the mountains! the likeness of much people! the sound of a tumult of kingdoms of nations gathered! Jehovah of Hosts mustering a host of battle!* The absence of verbs adds greatly to the vividness of the description. The sentence really consists of a series of exclamations, describing the impressions made successively upon the senses of an eye and ear-witness. It is commonly agreed that there is here a direct reference to the mixture of nations in the army of Cyrus. Besides the Persians and the Medes, Xenophon speaks of the Armenians, and Jeremiah adds the names of other nations (Jer. 50 : 9 ; 51 : 27). A.

6. "The day of the Lord" is His time for any signal achievement. It is here said to be *at hand*, not in point of absolute time, which was not far from two centuries to the first fatal blow, and much longer still before Babylon became utterly desolate; but it was near, either as seen by the prophet and with reference to the impressions made on his mind; or with relation to the events immediately preceding and sketched just above. It would be but a short time after the mustering of those Median hosts before the proud city would fall. It will come as a mighty ruin from the Almighty one; where the Hebrew signifies that none other than a resistless overthrow should be expected from an omnipotent arm. The words rendered "destruction" and "Almighty" are from the same root. H. C.

9. All this must happen and at a set time—for *behold the day of Jehovah cometh—terrible—*

and wrath and heat of anger—to place the land a waste—and its sinners He will destroy out of it. The moral causes of the ruin threatened are significantly intimated by calling the people of the earth or land its sinners.

11. The prophet, according to his custom (chaps. 1:22; 5:7; 11:9), now resolves his figures into literal expressions, showing that the natural convulsions just predicted are to be understood as metaphorical descriptions of the Divine judgments. *And I will visit upon the world its wickedness—and upon the wicked their iniquity—and I will cause to cease the arrogance of presumptuous sinners—and the pride of tyrants I will humble.* A.—“Punish the world for their iniquity” conceives of the great Chaldean empire as embracing most of the world then known to the Jews. Thus ancient authors called the Roman Empire “the whole world.”

12. “More precious,” in the sense of more scarce and rare. The waste of human life occasioned by war with its triple scourge—the sword, pestilence, and famine—will leave but few men where but lately were so many. II. C.

13. The figurative form of speech is here resumed, and what was before expressed by the obscuration of the heavenly bodies is now denoted by a general commotion of the frame of nature. *Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth shall shake out of its place in the wrath of Jehovah of Hosts and in the day of the heat of His anger.* A.

17. The Medes only are named (without the Persians)—as in Jer. 51:11, 28—for the reason that they rose to prominence first in time, and really led in the conquest of Babylon. As bearing on the Divine inspiration of this prophecy, it should be distinctly noted that when Isaiah wrote it, the Medes were yet a dependent province of the great Assyrian empire, and had never been known as a powerful, independent kingdom. Who could foresee that they ever would be? “They revolted” (says Dr. Alexander) “at the time of the Assyrian invasion of Judah and Israel. Their first king, Dejoces, was elected about B.C. 700 (i.e., within one year of the death of Hezekiah). His son, Phraortes, conquered Persia. Then the united Medes and Persians, with the aid of the Babylonians, subdued Assyria under the conduct of Cyaxares I. (B.C. 625). The conquest of Babylon was effected in the reign of Cyaxares II., by the Median army, with an auxiliary force of thirty thousand Persians under the command of Cyrus, the king’s nephew, B.C. 538.” Unlike the more southern nations of Asia, the Arab

plundering tribes, and indeed unlike most nations that have ever waged war, the Medes, and especially the Persians, thought less of gold than of conquest and glory. Xenophon puts in the mouth of Cyrus, addressing the Medes, sentiments of the same character. “Ye men of Media, and all ye now present; I know you well, and that ye have not come forth with me in this war as men who want money and goods.” How should the eye of a merely human sagacity have foreseen this special feature of a conquering power as yet unborn and of course with no national character yet developed? H. C.

19. From the very height of splendor and renown Babylon shall be reduced not only to subjection, but to annihilation. *And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the ornament, the pride of the Chaldees, shall be like God’s overthrowing Sodom and Gomorrah—i.e., shall be totally destroyed in execution of a special Divine judgment.*

20. The conversion of a populous and fertile district into a vast pasture ground, however rich and well frequented, implies extensive ruin, but not such ruin as is here denounced. Babylon was not even to be visited by shepherds, nor to serve as the encamping ground of wandering Arabs. The completeness of the threatened desolation will be seen by comparing these expressions with chaps. 5:5, 17; 7:21; 17:2, where it is predicted that the place in question should be *for flocks to lie down with none to make them afraid*. So fully has this prophecy been verified that the Bedouins, according to the latest travellers, are even superstitiously afraid of passing a single night upon the site of Babylon. A.

21. “Wild beasts of the desert shall lie there;” “the wild beasts of the desert, with the wild beasts of the islands, shall dwell there” (Jer. 50:39). So it was prophesied, and so it is. Speaking of the Babil mound, Mr. Rich observes, “There are many dens of wild beasts in various parts, in one of which I found the bones of sheep and other animals, and perceived a strong smell, like that of a lion.” “There are several deep excavations into the sides of the mound,” remarks Ker Porter. “These souterrains are now the refuge of jackals and other savage animals. The mouths of their entrances are strewn with the bones of sheep and goats; and the loathsome smell that issues from most of them is sufficient warning not to proceed into the den.” On a visit to the Birs Nimroud, the same traveller observed through his glass several lions on the summit of the great mound,

and afterward found their footprints in the soft soil of the desert at its base. This feature of the prophecies also is therefore literally fulfilled. The solitude, deserted by men, is sought the more on that account by the wild beasts of the country; and the lion, the jackal, and probably the leopard, have their lairs in the substructions of the temple of Belus, and the palace of Nebuchadnezzar. G. R.

14:1-23. The destruction of Babylon is again foretold, and more explicitly connected with the deliverance of Israel from bondage. After a general assurance of God's favor to His people, and of an exchange of conditions between them and their oppressors, they are represented as joining in a song of triumph over their fallen enemy. In this song, which is universally admitted to possess the highest literary merit, they describe the earth as again reposing from its agitation and affliction, and then breaking forth into a shout of exultation, in which the very trees of the forest join (verses 1-8). By a still bolder figure, the unseen world is represented as perturbed at the approach of the fallen tyrant, who is met, as he enters, by the kings already there, amazed to find him sunk as low as themselves and from a still greater height of actual elevation and of impious pretensions, which are strongly contrasted with his present condition, as deprived not only of regal honors, but of decent burial (verses 9-20). The threatening is then extended to the whole race, and the prophecy closes as before with a prediction of the total desolation of Babylon (verses 21-23).

1. This verse declares God's purpose in destroying the Babylonian power. *For Jehovah will pity (or have mercy upon) Jacob, and will again choose Israel and cause them to rest on their (own) land—and the stranger shall be joined to them—and they shall be attached to the house of Jacob.* Jacob and Israel are here used for the whole race. Umbreit correctly understands this not as a mere promise of temporal deliverance and increase to Israel as a nation, but as an assurance that the preservation of the chosen people was a necessary means for the fulfilment of God's purposes of mercy to mankind in general. The literal fulfilment of the last clause in its primary sense is clear from such statements as the one in Esther 8:17.

3. In this verse and the following context the prophet, in order to reduce the general promise of the foregoing verse to a more graphic and impressive form, recurs to the downfall of Babylon, as the beginning of the series of deliverances which he had predicted, and describes

the effect upon those most concerned, by putting into the mouth of Israel a song of triumph over their oppressor. This is universally admitted to be one of the finest specimens of Hebrew and indeed of ancient composition.

4. *That thou shalt raise this song over the king of Babylon and say, How hath the oppressor ceased, the golden (city) ceased!* The king here introduced is an ideal personage, whose downfall represents that of the Babylonian monarchy.

7. *At rest, quiet, is the whole earth. They burst forth into singing (or a shout of joy).* There is no inconsistency between the clauses, as the first is not descriptive of silence, but of tranquillity and rest. *The land had rest* is a phrase employed in the Book of Judges (e.g., 5:31) to describe the condition of the country after a great national deliverance. A.—Babylon had subdued all the great powers of Western Asia and Northern Africa—i.e., the whole earth as known to the Jews. When she fell they all breathed freely, and felt themselves at rest. Joyful in the thought of no more servitude to a power so oppressive, they break forth in exultant song. H. C.

8. Not only the earth and its inhabitants take part in this triumphant song or shout, but the trees of the forest. *Also the cypresses rejoice with respect to thee—the cedars of Lebanon—(saying) now that thou art fallen, the feller shall not come up against us.* Now that we are safe from Thee, we fear no other enemy. The only meaning of these figures that seems consistent with a pure taste is the one proposed by Calvin, who supposes this to be merely a part of one great picture, representing universal nature as rejoicing. The *symbolical* and *mechanical* interpretations are as much out of place here as they would be in a thousand splendid passages of classical and modern poetry, where no one yet has ever dreamed of applying them. Both here and elsewhere in the sacred books, inanimate Nature is personified, and speaks herself instead of being merely spoken of.

9. The bold personification is now extended from the earth and its forests to the invisible or lower world, the inhabitants of which are represented as aroused at the approach of the new victim and as coming forth to meet him. *Hell from beneath is moved (in commotion) for thee to meet thee (at) thy coming—it rouses for thee the giants (the gigantic shades or spectres), all the chief ones of the earth—it raises from their thrones all the kings of the nations.* A.—The regions of the dead are laid open, and Hades is represented as rousing up the shades of the departed monarchs; they rise from their thrones to meet

the king of Babylon at his coming, and insult him on his being reduced to the same estate of impotence and dissolution with themselves. This is one of the boldest figures that ever was attempted in poetry, and is executed with astonishing brevity, perspicuity, and force. This image of the state of the dead is taken from the Eastern custom of burying, those at least of higher rank, in large sepulchral vaults hewn in the rock. We must form to ourselves an idea of an immense subterraneous vault, a vast gloomy cavern, all round the sides of which there are cells to receive the dead bodies; here the deceased monarchs lie, in a distinguished sort of state, each on his couch, with his arms beside him and his sword at his head. (See Ezek. 32 : 27.) These illustrious shades rise at once from their couches, as from their thrones, and advance to the entrance of the cavern, to meet the king of Babylon and to taunt him on his fall. *Bp. Lowth.*

12. The word *hêlêl*, rendered *Lucifer* in the Authorized Version, from the root *halal*, to shine, here describes the king of Babylon as a shining morning star, to be cast down suddenly from the height of worldly splendor. The frequent application of the words to Satan, and his fall from heaven, is certainly not the direct and proper meaning of the passage. But the analogy is so close between the character of the proud king of Babylon and the lost archangel, the king over all the children of pride, between this political judgment and the revealed warning of our Lord Himself (Luke 10 : 18), as fully to vindicate this frequent use of the words from the charge of being a gross perversion of the text. The resemblance is very full and complete, both in sin and punishment, between the human and angelic leaders in pride and rebellion, and is fully confirmed by the later prophecies of the New Testament (Rev. 12 : 9-12 ; 20 : 3, 10). *Birks.*—Tertullian and other fathers, Gregory the Great, and the scholastic commentators, regarding Luke 10 : 18 as an explanation of this verse, apply it to the fall of Satan, from which has arisen the popular perversion of the beautiful name *Lucifer*, to signify the devil. Erroneous as this exposition is, it scarcely deserves the severe reprehension which some later commentators give it who receive with great indulgence exegetical hypotheses much more absurd. *A.*

13. The fall of this proud king was the more fearful by reason of his lofty and even blasphemous pretensions and aspirations. Not satisfied with surpassing everything human and eclipsing all the glory of earth, he had said in his

heart, "I will ascend even to heaven itself; I will set my throne above the very stars of God; I will be like the Most High!" The remains of his palace are to-day a huge mass of ruins, sufficing, however, to show that when in their glory they lacked nothing that human genius and the resources of the conqueror of the world could command.

18-20. To heighten his infamy, the prophet represents him as lying unburied, or, if once buried, as being disinterred, exposed, and denied the honors of a decent burial. Through all the ancient world, Jewish or heathen, no infamy or misfortune could exceed that of being denied the honors of interment. Here the king of Babylon is put in contrast with other kings. They all lie in state, every one in his sepulchre, in the "house" appointed for all the living, and often in magnificent tombs, fitted up with immense labor and cost, and with the utmost display; but Chaldea's proud and cruel king is thrust out as a thing despised, even as the clothing of slain men all bloodstained and polluted, like a carcass to be trodden under every foot. He goes to this doom of infamy because he has destroyed his own land, and slain his own people; his haughty and cruel administration having proved the ruin not of his people only, but of his country, their "land." The direct enumeration of the points and features of his infamy closes off with a general principle or law of the moral universe: *The race of evil-doers shall never be in honor.* The posterity of those who are mighty only to do wrong, who have aspirations only in the line of supreme selfishness, must go down to utter infamy. *H. C.*

21. The dramatic form of the prediction is repeatedly shifted, so that the words of the triumphant Jews, of the dead, of the prophet, and of God Himself, succeed each other insensibly, without any attempt to make the points of transition prominent. *A.*—Here the prophet lays aside the dramatic figures of the song, and speaks in his own person, denouncing the utter extinction of the guilty dynasty. "After the storming of Babylon by the Medes, the kingdom and royal house, established by Nabopolassar, vanished entirely from history. The last shoot of the royal family was slain as a child of conspirators." *Birks.*

22. So was the event. From the first blow struck by Cyrus in the conquest of the city, that kingdom in fact never rose again to power; never regained possession of its former territory; never overspread the earth with its dependent subject cities. This special and strik-

ing prophecy that no name or remnant, son or nephew of that fated dynasty should ever rise again to power, has been definitely and undeniably fulfilled. No scion of that royal house ever again sat on the throne of Babylon. Reverting to the strain of these predictions of ruin on the proud monarch of Babylon as culminating in his doom in Sheol, it will be seen that the prophet not only alludes to this after life as a terrible retribution for his sins, but he makes this the fundamental idea of the whole scene. No other one thought is so central; none other so pervades the whole description as this—*Retribution for human pride and impiety toward God: Retribution for oppression and wrong toward man.* It must be admitted that such and so much prominence must fairly represent both the doctrine taught by the Spirit of God and the views held by the good men of that age, in regard to the state of the wicked after death. H. C.

24-27. There is here a climax which marks strongly the unity of the whole. For in verse 21 we have a prophetic warning; in verses 22, 23 its confirmation by the Lord of Hosts Himself; and here, in verses 24, 25, not only the voice of the Lord of Hosts, but His solemn oath predictive of coming judgment. All creatures are challenged to show whether they can reverse His firm decree or turn back His almighty hand. The warnings and burdens of the more distant future are used to deepen and confirm the certainty of that great visitation, which was nearer at hand, and forms the main central thought in these earlier prophecies. The sore judgment on the Assyrian would also be a gracious reprieve to the kingdom of Judah before its fall, a typical redemption, a pledge of the full and final deliverance in days to come. *Birks.*—This passage predicts briefly the destruction of the Assyrian army in the Lord's

land. The locality "upon my mountains" corresponds with the prophetic account in chap. 10: 28-34, the mountainous region near Jerusalem. It is introduced here to impress strongly the fact that what the Lord purposes He surely performs. Let this prediction against Assyria stand as a sample—an illustrative case—of the certain connection between prediction and fulfilment; between the Lord's purpose and its execution. In the case of the Assyrian hosts, the fatal blow followed close upon the prophetic word. After it fell, the example would stand before the nation as a solemn voucher for the truth of these predicted judgments on Babylon. Nor is the analogy restricted to the single point of certain fulfilment upon God's enemies. It covered also another point: deliverance to God's people. When that blow fell on Assyria, it struck the yoke from the neck of the Lord's people, and His burden from their back. So should His fatal blow on great Babylon bring speedy deliverance and restoration to His people. H. C.

26, 27. The prophet now explains his previous conjunction of events so remote as the Assyrian overthrow and the fall of Babylon, by declaring both to be partial executions of one general decree against all hostile and opposing powers. *This is the purpose that is purposed upon all the earth, and this the hand that is stretched out over all the nations.* Here Gill is felicitous in paraphrase—"There's nothing comes to pass but He has purposed, and everything He has purposed comes to pass." A.—The same hand of power and justice that is to be stretched out against the Assyrian for invading the people of God shall be "stretched out upon all the nations" that do likewise. It is still true, and will be ever so, "Cursed is he that curses God's Israel" (Num. 24: 9). God will be an enemy to His people's enemies (Ex. 23: 22). H.

ISAIAH, CHAPTERS XIV. 28-32; XV., XVI., XVII.

BURDENS OF PHILISTIA, MOAB, AND DAMASCUS.

14: 28 IN the year that king Ahaz died was this burden.

29 Rejoice not, O Philistia, all of thee, because the rod that smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a basilisk, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.
30 And the firstborn of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety: and I will
31 kill thy root with famine, and thy remnant shall be slain. Howl, O gate; cry, O city; thou art melted away, O Philistia, all of thee; for there cometh a smoke out of the north, and

32 none standeth aloof at his appointed times. What then shall one answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded Zion, and in her shall the afflicted of his people take refuge.

15 : 1 The burden of Moab.

For in a night Ar of Moab is laid waste, *and* brought to nought; for in a night Kir of Moab is laid waste, *and* brought to nought. He is gone up to Bayith, and to Dibon, to the high places, to weep: Moab howleth over Nebo, and over Medeba: on all their heads is baldness, every beard is cut off. In their streets they gird themselves with sackcloth: on their housetops, and in their broad places, every one howleth, weeping abundantly. And Heshbon crieth out, and Elealeh; their voice is heard even unto Jahaz: therefore the armed men of Moab cry aloud; his soul trembleth within him. My heart crieth out for Moab; her nobles *flee* unto Zoar, to Eglath-shelishiyah: for by the ascent of Luhith with weeping they go up; for in the way of Horonaim they raise up a cry of destruction. For the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate: for the grass is withered away, the tender grass faileth, there is no green thing. Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that which they have laid up, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows. For the cry is gone round about the borders of Moab; the howling thereof unto Eglaim, and the howling thereof unto Beer-elim. For the waters of Dimon are full of blood: for I will bring yet more upon Dimon, a lion upon him that escapeth of Moab, and upon the remnant of the land.

16 : 1 Send ye the lambs for the ruler of the land from Sela *which is* toward the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughter of Zion. For it shall be that, as wandering birds, as a scattered nest, so shall the daughters of Moab be at the fords of Arnon. Give counsel, execute judgement; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday: hide the outcasts; bewray not the wanderer. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee; as for Moab, be thou a covert to him from the face of the spoiler: for the extortioner is brought to nought, spoiling ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land. And a throne shall be established in mercy, and one shall sit thereon in truth, in the tent of David; judging, and seeking judgement, and swift to do righteousness.

We have heard of the pride of Moab, *that* he is very proud; even of his arrogancy, and his pride, and his wrath; his boastings are nought. Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab, every one shall howl: for the raisin-cakes of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn, utterly stricken. For the fields of Heshbon languish, *and* the vine of Sibmah; the lords of the nations have broken down the choice plants thereof; they reached even unto Jazer, they wandered into the wilderness; her branches were spread abroad, they passed over the sea. Therefore I will weep with the weeping of Jazer for the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh: for upon thy summer fruits and upon thy harvest the *battle* shout is fallen. And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the fruitful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither joyful noise: no treader shall tread out wine in the presses; I have made the *vintage* shout to cease. Wherefore my bowels sound like an harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kir-heres. And it shall come to pass, when Moab presenteth himself, when he wearieth himself upon the high place, and shall come to his sanctuary to pray, that he shall not prevail.

13, 14 This is the word that the LORD spake concerning Moab in time past. But now the LORD hath spoken, saying, Within three years, as the years of an hireling, and the glory of Moab shall be brought into contempt, with all his great multitude; and the remnant shall be very small and of no account.

17 : 1 The burden of Damascus.

Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap. The cities of Aroer are forsaken: they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid. The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria; they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the LORD of hosts.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean. And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the standing corn, and his arm reapeth the ears; yea, it shall be as when one gleaneth ears in the valley of Rephaim. Yet there shall be left therein gleanings, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost branches

7 of a fruitful tree, saith the LORD, the God of Israel. In that day shall a man look unto his
 8 Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. And he shall not look to
 the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall he have respect to that which his fingers have
 9 made, either the Asherim, or the sun-images. In that day shall his strong cities be as the
 forsaken places in the wood and on the mountain top, which were forsaken from before the
 10 children of Israel: and it shall be a desolation. For thou hast forgotten the God of thy salva-
 tion, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength; therefore thou plantest pleas-
 11 ant plants, and settest it with strange slips: in the day of thy planting thou hedgest it in,
 and in the morning thou makest thy seed to blossom: but the harvest fleeth away in the day
 of grief and of desperate sorrow.
 12 Ah, the uproar of many peoples, which roar like the roaring of the seas; and the rushing
 13 of nations, that rush like the rushing of mighty waters! The nations shall rush like the
 rushing of many waters: but he shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be
 chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like the whirling dust before the
 14 storm. At eventide behold terror; and before the morning they are not. This is the portion
 of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.

THE BURDENS OF PHILISTIA, OF MOAB, AND
 OF DAMASCUS.

Chapters 14: 28-32; 15; 16; 17.

THE burden of Babylon, the main adversary
 of Judah, is followed by three against the bor-
 der States on three sides of Palestine; and all
 these have a common character, agreeing with
 the date prefixed to the first of them. Sore
 judgment from Assyrian spoilers was at hand,
 but Zion was to prove a safe and sure refuge.
Birks.

14: 28-32. "This burden" is the special
 prediction of calamity on Philistia. As to the
 historical allusions in this passage, Palestina is
 admitted to be the ancient equivalent of Philis-
 tia, the country of the Philistines, lying along
 the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, and on
 the southwest border of Canaan. The Philis-
 tines came originally from Egypt; settled in
 Caphtor (Jer. 47: 4—Caphtor probably meaning
 Crete), and thence took possession of the sea-
 coast of Canaan. "The rod that smote thee"
 is the power of Judah; "broken" when for the
 sins of Ahaz "the Lord brought Judah low,"
 for "He had made Judah naked"—i.e., defence-
 less, before her enemies. During the reign of
 Ahaz the Philistines had invaded the cities of
 the low country, had taken several, and dwelt
 there. (See 2 Chron. 28: 18, 19.) But let not
 Philistia rejoice in these transient successes
 against Judah. A more formidable power will
 rise against her in the Assyrian hosts. They
 will desolate her country, and bring final relief
 to Judah from the Philistines.

32. Philistia is now fallen, and Zion has no
 more to fear from this ancient and long formid-
 able foe. What now shall one answer the
 messengers who may come from foreign nations
 to ask after the fortunes of Israel? This, that

the Lord Jehovah hath laid the foundations of
 Zion, and His poorest, feeblest children may
 trust His care and love to protect her to the
 end. The Lord will never forsake the Zion
 which Himself has founded!

Chaps. 15 and 16 are in subject one—a prophe-
 cy of calamity on Moab. In most points this
 prophecy bears a very close resemblance to Jer.
 48, which treats of the fall of Moab. Ezekiel
 makes a much more brief allusion to this event
 (25: 8-11). Moab, whose country lies on the
 east side of the southern half of the Dead Sea,
 with Edom on its southern border, and Ammon
 on its northern, was, like Ammon, descended
 from Lot. Together with Ammon and Edom,
 he was spared from destruction when God gave
 to Israel for a possession his neighbors, Sihon
 and Og, of the Amorites, and the nations of
 Canaan. At some periods Moab seems to have
 held toward Israel relations half fraternal; yet
 sometimes they were hostile, and again tribu-
 tary. H. C.

Chap. 15 is occupied with a description of the
 general grief, occasioned by the conquest of the
 chief towns and the desolation of the country
 at large. Its chief peculiarities of form are the
 numerous names of places introduced, and the
 strong personification by which they are repre-
 sented as grieving for the public calamity. The
 chapter closes with an intimation of still greater
 evils. A.

1. The verse states that in a single night the
 two chief cities of Moab are carried by assault
 and utterly ruined—brought to a dead silence.
 Ar-Moab was her capital, situated on the south
 side of the river Arnon. Kir-Mob, a few miles
 southeast from Ar, was renowned for its mili-
 tary strength. Its ruins are still identified at
 Kerak. The fall of these two cities sealed the
 doom of Moab. H. C.

5. The prophet shares in the sorrow he describes, so vividly is he possessed by the awful picture the Spirit sets before his eyes. In their alarm at the fierce invader, the Moabites are seen hurrying toward Zoar, their extreme southern border. *Birks.*

Chap. 16 opens with an exhortation to the Moabites to seek protection from their enemies by renewing their allegiance to the house of David, accompanied by an intimation that this prospect of deliverance would not in fact be realized (verses 1-6). From this transient gleam of hope the prophecy reverts to a description of the general desolation and distress, in form almost identical with that in the foregoing chapter (verses 7-12). The prophecy then closes with a specification of the time at which it was to be fulfilled (verses 13, 14). A.

1. In this time of her distress Moab needed the protection of Judah, and felt this need. Hence in this verse the people are supposed to suggest to one another, or, as the sense may be, the prophet suggests to them, the resumption of this tribute in the hope of re-establishing friendly relations. Come and let us again send lambs to the legitimate ruler of our land, "and to the mount of the daughter of Zion." "From Selah." "Selah" is the Hebrew word for *rock*, corresponding to Petra in Greek, both being current names for the famed capital of Edom. This city was mainly built in a deep ravine between the rocks, many of its buildings being hewn from the rock itself. It is named here, we may suppose, either as the place to obtain the lambs, it being a great mart of trade; or as the point where the Moabites, fleeing south, were largely convened. H. C.

6. The prophecy enters here on a new stage, commencing with Moab's sin, and depicting their fate in still more elegiac strains. *Delitzsch.*

8-12. The people of Moab are here described by a beautiful and expressive figure, taken from the vine, for the culture of which they were famous, and which had ministered to their habits of sensual indulgence. This "vine of Sibmah," a chief seat of the vine culture, spreads its choice tendrils on all sides toward the borders of the land, to Jazer northward, into the wilderness on the east and south, and across the Dead Sea westward. But the Assyrian princes and captains, "the lords of the nations," would break down and destroy its flourishing branches. Their vintage mirth would be exchanged for the warshout of victorious enemies and loud wailings of distress. The prophet ends by recording his deep grief for these sorrows of Moab, and describes their

vain resort to senseless idols for help in their time of calamity. *Birks.*

Chap. 17. The most satisfactory view of the whole passage is that it was meant to be a prophetic picture of the doom which awaited the enemies of Judah, and that while many of its expressions admit of a general application, some traits in the description are derived from particular invasions and attacks. Thus Syria and Ephraim are expressly mentioned in the first part, while the terms of the last three verses are more appropriate to the slaughter of the Assyrian host; but as this is not explicitly referred to, there is no need of regarding it as the exclusive subject even of that passage. The eighteenth chapter may then be treated as a part of the same context. In the first part of chap. 17 the prophet represents the kingdoms of Syria and Ephraim as sharing the same fate, both being brought to desolation (verses 1-3). He then describes the desolation of Ephraim especially, by the figures of a harvest and a gathering of olives, in which little is left to be afterward gleaned (verses 4-6). As the effect of these judgments, he describes the people as renouncing their idols and returning to Jehovah (verses 7, 8). He then resumes his description of the threatened desolation, and ascribes it to the general oblivion of God and cultivation of strange doctrines and practices (verses 9-11). This last might be regarded as a simple repetition of the threatenings in verses 4-6, interrupted by the promise in verses 7, 8. But as the desolation of Syria and Israel was actually effected by successive strokes or stages, as Shalmaneser accomplished what Tiglath-pileser had begun, and as history records a partial conversion of the Israelites from their apostasy between these two attacks, it is altogether natural to understand the prophecy as exhibiting this sequence of events. In the close of the chapter, the prophet first describes a gathering of nations, and then their dispersion by Divine rebuke, which he declares to be the doom of all who attack or oppress God's people (verses 12-14). A.

2. The prophet predicts that these cities shall be abandoned of their people, probably by removal into captivity, and their ruins and forsaken mansions be appropriated by shepherds for their flocks. There should be no man to claim these forsaken houses; none to molest the flocks folded there.

3. Fortified cities should cease from Ephraim and royalty from Damascus and Syria. The glory of Syria and Damascus, their greatness and prestige as a kingdom, shall disappear, even

as in the case of Israel when the Assyrian cast her utterly down.

4-6. The fall of the kingdom of Israel before the Assyrian arms would leave only a few scattering inhabitants, even as a few ears are left when the grain harvest is gathered, or a few clusters of the grape or the olive, far out in the extreme boughs. The valley of Rephaim lay southwest from Jerusalem toward Bethlehem, and is specified here as being near and within sight from the city walls. As if the prophet would say, As you of the city have often seen in the valley of Rephaim. H. C.

7. Some refer this verse partially or wholly to the times of the New Testament, others more correctly to the effect of the preceding judgments on the Ten Tribes of Israel. It is matter of history that after the Assyrian conquest and the general deportation of the people, many accepted Hezekiah's invitation and returned to the worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem (2 Chron. 30:11); and this reformation is alluded to as still continued in the times of Josiah (2 Chron. 34:9). At the same time the words may be intended to suggest that a similar effect might be expected to result from similar causes in later times.

8. The positive declaration of the preceding verse is negatively expressed in this, with a particular mention of the objects which had usurped the place of God. A.

10, 11. The prophet now turns his voice of

warning directly against Israel, whose league with Syria had led them so far astray. He names the true source of their troubles, and denounces the sure failure of all their schemes to recover political greatness, while forsaking the covenant of their God. The pleasant plants and strange slips are those worldly alliances and expedients, whereby they hoped to regain their lost honor and greatness. Instead of the pleasant crop, so diligently tended, being safely housed, the trees themselves should wither and be cut down, and then be piled into a heap, to be burned up with fire. *Birks.*

12, 13. The vast Assyrian hosts, their sound like the deep roar of the ocean; their rushing like the mighty waters, come on as if they would sweep our beloved Zion utterly away. But God from on high shall rebuke them. One word from His lips scatters them like the chaff on the hills of Judea before the wind, and like a rolling thing (the light thistle down) before the whirlwind! H. C.

14. The abrupt form of the sentence adds to the force of the description. At eventide there was trouble in the mighty camp of Assyria, when the commission of the destroying angel began. Before the morning "he is no more," the work is done. "When they arose in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty! just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of nations!" *Birks.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTERS XVIII., XIX., XX.

BURDEN OF EGYPT AND ETHIOPIA.

18:1 AH, the land of the rustling of wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia: that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of papyrus upon the waters, *saying*, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth, to a people terrible from their beginning onward; a nation that meteth out and treadeth down, whose land the rivers divide! All ye inhabitants of the world, and ye dwellers on the earth, when an ensign is lifted up on the mountains, see ye; and when the trumpet is blown, hear ye. For thus hath the LORD said unto me, I will be still, and I will behold in my dwelling place; like clear heat in sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. For afore the harvest, when the blossom is over, and the flower becometh a ripening grape, he shall cut off the sprigs with pruning-hooks, and the spreading branches shall be take away *and* cut down. They shall be left together unto the ravenous birds of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth: and the ravenous birds shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them. In that time shall a present be brought unto the LORD of hosts of a people tall and smooth, and from a people terrible from their beginning onward; a nation that meteth out and treadeth down, whose land the rivers divide, to the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, the mount Zion.

19:1 The burden of Egypt.

Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and cometh unto Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. And I will stir up the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, *and* kingdom against kingdom. And the spirit of Egypt shall be made void in the midst of it; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek unto the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. And I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts. And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and become dry. And the rivers shall stink; and the streams of Egypt shall be minished and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither away. The meadows by the Nile, by the brink of the Nile, and all that is sown by the Nile, shall become dry, be driven away, and be no more. The fishers also shall lament, and all they that cast angle into the Nile shall mourn, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish. Moreover they that work in combed flax, and they that weave white cloth, shall be ashamed. And her pillars shall be broken in pieces, all they that work for hire *shall be* grieved in soul. The princes of Zoan are utterly foolish; the counsel of the wisest counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings? Where then are thy wise men? and let them tell thee now; and let them know what the LORD of hosts hath purposed concerning Egypt. The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Noph are deceived; they have caused Egypt to go astray, that are the corner stone of her tribes. The LORD hath mingled a spirit of perverseness in the midst of her: and they have caused Egypt to go astray in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit. Neither shall there be for Egypt any work, which head or tail, palm-branch or rush, may do. In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall tremble and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which he shaketh over it. And the land of Judah shall become a terror unto Egypt, every one to whom mention is made thereof shall be afraid, because of the purpose of the LORD of hosts, which he purposeth against it. In that day there shall be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of hosts; one shall be called The city of destruction. In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the LORD because of the

- oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour, and a defender, and he shall deliver them.
- 21 And the LORD shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day ; yea, they shall worship with sacrifice and oblation, and shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and shall perform it. And the LORD shall smite Egypt, smiting and healing ; and they shall return unto the LORD, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them.
- 23 In that day shall there be a high way out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria ; and the Egyptians shall worship with the Assyrians.
- 24 In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth : for that the LORD of hosts hath blessed them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.

20 : 1 In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and he fought against Ashdod and took it ; at that time the LORD spake by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go, and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put thy shoe from off thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. And the LORD said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and a wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia ; so shall the king of Assyria lead away the captives of Egypt, and the exiles of Ethiopia, young and old, naked and barefoot, and with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. And they shall be dismayed and ashamed, because of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory. And the inhabitant of this coastland shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation, whither we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria : and we, how shall we escape?

Chap. 18. The two great powers of Western Asia, in the days of Isaiah, were Assyria and Egypt or Ethiopia, the last two being wholly or partially united under Tirhakah, whose name and exploits are recorded in Egyptian monuments still extant, and who is expressly said in Scripture (2 K. 19 : 9) to have come out against Sennacherib. With one or the other of these great contending powers, Judah was commonly confederate, and of course at war with the other. Hezekiah is explicitly reproached by Rabshakeh (Isa. 36 : 9) with relying upon Egypt—*i.e.*, the Ethiopico-Egyptian empire. These historical facts, together with the mention of Cush in verse 1, and the appropriateness of the figures in verses 4, 5, to the destruction of Sennacherib's army, give great probability to the hypothesis now commonly adopted, that the prophet here announces that event to Ethiopia, as about to be effected by a direct interposition of Jehovah, and without human aid. At the same time, some of the expressions here employed admit of so many interpretations, that it is best to give the whole as wide an application as the language will admit, on the ground that it constitutes a part of a generic prophecy or picture of God's dealings with the foes of His people, including illustrations drawn from particular events, such as the downfall of Syria and Israel, and the slaughter of Sennacherib's army.

The prophet first invites the attention of the

Ethiopians and of the whole world to a great catastrophe as near at hand (verses 1-3). He then describes the catastrophe itself, by the beautiful figure of a vine or vineyard suffered to blossom and bear fruit, and then, when almost ready to be gathered, suddenly destroyed (verses 4-6). In consequence of this event, the same people who had been invoked in the beginning of the chapter are described as bringing presents to Jehovah at Jerusalem (verse 7).

The people specially described here are the Ethiopians, coupled with the Egyptians. Let it be borne in mind that a deep and rankling antipathy had for ages pervaded the two great rival kingdoms that sat respectively on the Nile and on the Euphrates. These valleys were the natural centres of wealth, population and political power, the one for Northern Africa, the other for Western Asia. Hence from the very founding of these kingdoms, Egypt and Assyria, far back at least as the age of Joseph and Moses, savage and bitter wars were waged between these great powers. Ethiopia was naturally associated with Egypt. That they were in closest alliance at this time is certified not only by profane history, but by historic notices in the Scriptures (2 K. 19 : 9 and Isa. 37 : 9).

The keynote to this chap. 18 is the sending of tidings of the overthrow of the Assyrian army to Ethiopia, and the moral results. In that vast slaughter, the mighty God had shown

His great power in destroying His enemies, and His greater love for His people in their protection. It now remained to make the utmost capital out of those displays of His glory by means of their moral impression on the wakened sympathies and eager minds of the great African kingdoms. H. C.

1. The wings, a dual word, are a natural figure for Egypt and Ethiopia, united at this very time, under So and Tirhakah, into a double power, protecting or overshadowing with its greatness the lands on either side. This Ethiopian dynasty in Egypt was a rare exception to its long series of native Pharaohs. It lasted (Herod., Manetho) about fifty years, and began seven or eight years only before the date of these burdens. *Birks.*

2. These must be the words of the prophet himself. The ambassadors have come to him to learn the news respecting the fall of the Assyrians. He now gives them their message to carry home. "Go," says he, "ye swift messengers" (travelling so rapidly on those light-running boats), go back to your own people—"to a nation," not "trodden down," but a nation of *down-treading* people; treading down others; of all-crushing power. Whose land the rivers *intersect*—i.e., whose land is cut in all directions by the head-waters of the Nile. The entire description represents this to be a nation of great power and prowess in arms.

3. In the construction of this verse the choice lies between applying it to the Assyrian hosts preparing for their assault upon God's people, or to God's hosts preparing to annihilate them. The general sense is not materially affected by this choice, since in either case the attention of the wide world is called to witness the same grand scene. But inasmuch as God's agency in this event is specially described in verses 4-6, I incline to refer this verse 3 specially to the Assyrian. On this construction the Lord proclaims, Let all the world look and see this proud Assyrian lifting up his banner on the mountains over against My holy city, and blowing his trumpet to summon his squadrons to the final charge. H. C.

4. *For thus said (or saith) Jehovah to me, I will rest (remain quiet), and will look on in my dwelling-place.* This verse assigns a reason for the preceding invitation to attend. The obvious meaning of the figure is, that God would let the enemy proceed in the execution of His purposes until they were nearly accomplished.

5. The obvious meaning of the figures is, that although God would suffer the designs of

the enemy to approach completion, He would nevertheless interfere at the last moment and destroy both him and them. As if He had said. Let all the world await the great catastrophe—for I will let the enemy almost attain his end—but let them still attend—for before it is attained, I will destroy him.

7. All are agreed that we have here the prediction of an act of homage to Jehovah, occasioned by the great event described in the preceding verses. A.—An offering shall yet come from those far distant lands, high up around the head-waters of the Nile, to His own holy temple on Mount Zion. Nor is this a solitary case. It is rather an *illustrative* case, developing a great principle or law of His moral reign on earth—viz., that every manifestation of Himself, and especially those that are great and signal, shall surely yield their glorious fruits in the moral conquest of the world to Jesus Immanuel. This particular case has already thrown forward some foreshadowings of its future fulfilment, in the scenes briefly sketched (Acts 8: 26-39), where the prime-minister of a celebrated queen of Ethiopia found Christ by the aid of Philip in the reading of this very Book of Isaiah, and went home to his country rejoicing. Also in the further fact that some vestiges of Christianity—traces of its earlier power and perhaps prophecies of its later—have lived in that remote and almost unknown land unto this day. Assuredly, Ethiopia shall yet stretch forth her hands unto God (Ps. 68: 31). H. C.

Chap. 19. This burden of Egypt contains, first, a warning, a political downfall and decay; and next, a promise of conversion to God's service in later times. The main subject of the prophecy is the great change soon to pass over Egypt, when the ancient glory of the Pharaohs would completely die away, and be followed, first by a time of anarchy, next by the severe oppression of the Persian dynasty; and finally, by the renewed prosperity under the Ptolemies, and the dawns of a purer faith, to be completed by the perfect triumphs of the gospel in later days. *Birks.*

One special reason for bringing before the Jews this prophecy respecting Egypt was to check their tendency to look to Egypt rather than to God alone for help against Assyria. Hence these strong views of her weakness and of her lack of wisdom. Yet another reason may probably have been to show them that their own Jehovah is really the God of all the nations, and has thoughts of ultimate mercy for them all, purposing in His own time to bring

them all within the pale of His own spiritual kingdom. H. C.—Isaiah's prophecies with respect to Egypt are almost entirely depreciatory and denunciatory. He is bent on showing that she is a power on whom no dependence can be wisely placed, in the hope that he may thereby prevent Hezekiah and his princes from contracting any alliance with the Egyptian monarch. G. R.

This chapter admits of a well-defined division into two parts, one of which contains threatenings (verses 1–17), and the other promises (verses 18–25). The first part may again be subdivided. In verses 1–4 the Egyptians are threatened with a penal visitation from Jehovah, with a downfall of their idols, with intestine commotions, with the disappointment of their superstitious hopes, and with subjection to hard masters. In verses 5–10 they are threatened with physical calamities, the drying up of their streams, the decay of vegetation, the loss of their fisheries, and the destruction of their manufactures. In verses 11–17 the wisdom of their wise men is converted into folly, the courage of their brave men into cowardice, industry universally suspended, and the people filled with dread of the anger of Jehovah. The second part may be also subdivided. In verses 18–21, the Egyptians are described as acknowledging the true God, in consequence of what they had suffered at His hand, and the deliverance which He had granted them. In verses 22–25 the same cause is described as leading to an intimate union between Egypt, Assyria and Israel, in the service of Jehovah, and the enjoyment of His favor. . . . The most correct view of the matter seems to be as follows. The prophet, wishing to announce to the Jews the decline and fall of that great heathen power in which they were so constantly disposed to trust (30 : 1 ; 31 : 1), describes the event under figures borrowed from the actual condition of Egypt. The prophet vividly portrays the fall of Egypt by describing the waters of the Nile as failing, its meadows withering, its fisheries ceasing, and the peculiar manufactures of the country expiring, the proverbial wisdom of the nation changed to folly, its courage to cowardice, its strength to weakness. So too in the second part, the introduction of the true religion, and its effect as well on the internal state as on the international relations of the different countries, is expressed by figures drawn from the civil and religious institutions of the old economy.

1. The burden of Egypt. Behold ! Jehovah riding on a light cloud, and He comes into Egypt,

and the idols of Egypt move at His presence, and the heart of Egypt melts within him. This verse describes God as the author of the judgments afterward detailed. His visible appearance on a cloud, and the personification of the idols, prepare the mind for a poetical description.

2. Egypt against Egypt involves an allusion to the internal divisions of the kingdom, or rather to the existence of contemporary kingdoms, referred to in the other clause. A.—It is a remarkable illustration of this prophecy to find, as we do, from an inscription of Piankhi-Merammun, that about B.C. 735 Egypt was divided up among no fewer than twenty-two princes, of whom four bore the title of “king,” and that a civil war raged among them for some considerable time. Briefly, it may be said that Egypt from about B.C. 735 to B.C. 650 suffered from a continued series of civil wars, which rendered her exceptionally weak, and caused her to fall an easy prey alternately to the Ethiopians and the Assyrians. G. R.

5–10. The decay of Egypt is described under the figure of a failing inundation of the Nile. In chap. 16 : 8, 9 the vine of Sibmah represents Moab itself, a country famous for its vineyards. Here, in like manner, the Nile, with its pastures, fisheries and manufactures, is made to represent the whole national life and prosperity of Egypt. The things named were main elements of the national wealth and power. But oppression and anarchy would lessen the benefit of prosperous seasons, and double the loss in years of scanty inundation. Thus an excessive and extreme wasting of the Nile becomes a striking emblem for the whole course of national decay. This explains the repeated mention, nine times in succession, of the flood, the waters and the river. *Birks.*

6. Reeds. Never had prophecy greater circumstances of improbability to overcome, and never was prediction more completely fulfilled, than in the case of the prophecy recorded here. The indispensable papyrus in the time of Isaiah flourished through the whole of the Thebaid, Heptanomos, and the Delta, as the three divisions of ancient Egypt were named. Of its utility no European reader can form an adequate idea. Stringent laws were established for its protection and cultivation, and from its first appearance to maturity the papyrus was considered to be under the special care of local deities ; it was planted, tended and cut with an almost religious ceremonial. Adaptable for various uses, not only paper, cloth and brushes, but the roughest and most delicate manufactures were produced from it

alike. Sails, cordage and baskets for shipping, sandals, hats, skirts, carpets, chairs and seats for domestic service were made of it. Men and animals fed upon the tender shoots. A syrup was obtained and medicine extracted from it. It formed the cradle of the Nubian baby; it decorated the canopy of Pharaoh's throne; it was scattered in processions through the streets; it was painted on the houses; it was wrought in granite on the temples. The Egyptian ladies twined the living blossoms in their hair, or wore it in chains around their necks as an amulet. Princes, priests, and peasants offered it on the altar in commemoration of the dead. The papyrus was the plaything of the child and the sceptre of the god, the glory of the country, the staple of its commerce, and the hieroglyphic emblem of its name. By withholding the supply of the papyrus, Ptolemy Philadelphus was enabled to repress the formation of a rival library by the Pergamean kings; while, by opening the markets of the Delta, the poetry of Greece and the philosophy of Rome were transmitted throughout the whole of the then known world. Alas for the permanence of mundane glories! Thirty centuries of oppression, superstition and neglect have dried up the artificial lakes in which the plant was cultivated. The hot wind of the south and the sands of the desert have exterminated the lovely paper rush in the empire of the Pharaohs, and there is not a single indigenous papyrus in the whole of Egypt proper. A stream in Sicily and the marshes of Merom in Palestine alone contain the nearly extinct vegetable; and in the conservatories of London, Sion, and Kew, England actually possesses more living papyri than can now be found from Syene to Alexandria. *Treasury.*

8. Having described the effect of the drought on vegetation, he now describes its effect upon those classes of the people who were otherwise dependent on the river for subsistence. The multitude of fishes in the Nile, and of people engaged in catching them, is attested both by ancient and modern writers. A.

10. This verse sums up the whole description of Egypt's political decay. The pillars or foundations, a word used once only beside (Ps. 11:3), may denote those pursuits of industry which were the mainstay and strength of the nation. These would be broken down, and all the traders and workmen, whose means of livelihood were gone, would grieve in soul at the affliction and ruin of the land.

12. Where are the wise counsellors, who should form one main part of this noble heri-

tage? The mournful change from world-famous wisdom to folly would be God's own judgment on an idolatrous land. When nations reject the words of God, their wisdom soon dies out, and turns to utter foolishness. *Birks.*

15. The figures of head and tail, branch and rush, are used, as in chap. 9:13, to denote all classes of society, or rather the extremes between which the others are included.

17. This verse relates not to the destruction of Sennacherib's army in Judah, nor to the approach of the Assyrians from that quarter, nor to an attack upon Egypt by Judah itself, but to the new feelings which would be entertained by the Egyptians toward the God of the Jews and the true religion. Judah, in a political and military sense, might still appear contemptible; but in another aspect, and for other reasons, it would be an object of respect and even fear to the Egyptians. A.

18. One view which alone seems to rest on the things actually said in the text is that of Calvin—viz., that out of six cities of Egypt five shall learn of the true God and consecrate themselves to Him; but one shall be destroyed. This is assumed to indicate in general the proportion between those who are converted to God and those who perish in their sins. "Speaking the language of Canaan" means not necessarily that they learn and speak the Hebrew tongue, but that they use the language of Christian experience; of course in sincerity, to express the thoughts, purposes and affections of the Christian heart. At the same time there may be a tacit allusion to the fact that the earliest fulfilment of this prophecy came through the emigration of Jews into Egypt, bringing their own language, literally that of Canaan, and their sacred writings, God's own inspired word. In the age of the Ptolemies, the Jews became quite numerous in Egypt. The well-known translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, was then made into Greek (as is said) by request of the Egyptian king. The moral condition of the Egyptians was improved by these agencies. Another stage of fulfilment occurred during the first six centuries of the Christian age, when large and flourishing churches abounded in Egypt. Yet a richer fulfilment remains to be realized. H. C.

Many Jews, after Nebuchadnezzar had taken Jerusalem, fled into Egypt, and carried along with them Jeremiah, who there uttered most of his prophecies concerning the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar. From thence some

knowledge of God and some notices of the prophecies might easily be derived to the Egyptians. Alexander transplanted many of the Jews into his new city, Alexandria; the first Ptolemy carried more; and his successors gave great encouragement to settlers, nor were the Jews less favored by many of the Syrian kings. *Bp. Newton.*

19. As we might now speak of a missionary *pitching his tent* at Hebron or at Shechem, without intending to describe the precise form of his habitation, so the prophet represents the converts to the true faith as erecting an altar and a pillar to the Lord in Egypt, as Abraham and Jacob did of old in Canaan. A still more exact illustration is afforded by the frequent use among ourselves of the word *altar* to denote the practice of devotion, especially in families.

20. If, as we have seen reason to believe, the chapter is a prophecy not of a single event, but of a great progressive change to be wrought in the condition of Egypt by the introduction of the true religion, the promise of the verse before us must be that when they cried God would send them a deliverer, a promise verified not once, but often, not by Ptolemy or Alexander only, but by others, and in the highest sense by Christ Himself. The assertion, that the meaning of the prophecy was exhausted by events before the advent, is as easily contradicted as advanced. It is admitted that the rise of Alexander's power was contemporaneous with a great increase of Jewish population and Jewish influence in Egypt, and also with a great improvement in the social and political condition of the people. This was still more remarkably the case when Christianity was introduced, and who shall say what is yet to be witnessed and experienced in Egypt under the influence of this same gospel?

22. This verse may indeed be regarded as a recapitulation of the whole preceding prophecy, consisting as it does of an extended threatening (verses 1-17) followed by an ample promise (verses 18-21). As if he had said, Thus will God smite Egypt and then heal it. A.

23. The natural significance of a broad highway, a great international road, between Egypt and Assyria, passing through Israel, must be the most free and easy communication and the spirit of mutual fraternity. These nations are no longer foes as for ages past by, but friends—all one in the fellowship of Christian love. The people of each kingdom may pass freely to the other. The Egyptians will serve (God)

with the Assyrians (so the last clause must mean). H. C.

24. The meaning obviously is that Israel should be *one of three*, or a party to a triple union. In verse 25 the perfect union of the three great powers in the service of God and the enjoyment of His favor is expressed by a solemn benediction on the three, in which language commonly applied to Israel exclusively is extended to Egypt and Assyria. A.—They shall all be blessed of the Lord. They shall all be owned by Him as His. Though Egypt was formerly a house of bondage to the people of God, and Assyria an unjust invader of them, all this shall now be forgiven and forgotten, and they shall be as welcome to God as Israel. They are all alike His people, whom He takes under His protection; they are formed by Him, for they are “the work of His hands;” not only as a people, but as His people. They are formed for Him, for they are His inheritance, precious in His eyes, and dear to Him, and from whom He has His rent of honor out of this lower world. They shall be owned together by Him as jointly His; His in concert; they shall all share in one and the same blessing. Those that are united in the love and blessing of God ought, for that reason, to be united to each other in charity. H.

This broad outlook of prophecy encompasses the world, and stretches forward into times then far remote. The Assyria of that age has long since passed away; but other nations have come upon her ancient soil and elsewhere in populous Asia—*e.g.*, the Armenians and Parthians of the early Christian ages, and others in modern and yet future times, to take her place and stand forward to receive this blessing which the Lord announced in her name. The Egypt too of that age has gone down very low, and long since ceased to be a great political power among the nations. But Egypt fitly represents Africa. In that continent there are still myriads of human souls sitting in darkness to whom the blessings of the great Messiah must yet come. Looking deeper than the mere costume and drapery of this prophecy, even to its inner spirit, we shall see in it that the old antipathies of belligerent nations who had kept the world in a flame with their wars for more than a thousand years must give place to the freest intercommunication; the most cordial and fraternal fellowship; the hearty and universal service of the living God. This change having come over them, they are joyfully recognized by the great God as being all His own beloved and honored people! Let us

bless the name of God for such gleams of light upon the prophetic future of our long-time sin-worn and wasted world ! H. C.

Chap. 20. About the time of the Assyrian attack on Ashdod, the prophet is directed to walk naked and barefoot as a sign of the defeat and captivity of the Egyptians and Ethiopians who were at war with Assyria. The first verse fixes the date of this symbolical transaction ; the second contains the Divine command and the record of its execution ; the third and fourth explain the meaning of the symbol ; the fifth and sixth predict its effect, or rather that of the event which it prefigured. A.

Isaiah, by a Divine direction, makes himself personally a sign to the people by laying off his usual sackcloth and sandals, and "walking naked and barefoot," to indicate how the Egyptians and Ethiopians were to be borne away as captives before the king of Assyria. Cases of such symbolic acts are frequent in Ezekiel. This stands alone in Isaiah. This chapter introduces to our acquaintance a new king of Assyria, not mentioned by name elsewhere in the Scriptures—Sargon. He was one of the greatest of Assyrian monarchs. Tartan, his lieutenant-general, served in the same capacity under his son Sennacherib. (See 2 K. 18 : 17.) The moral bearing of this prophecy is obvious—viz., to show the Jews how vain were all their hopes of aid from Egypt against Assyria. When they saw Egyptians and Ethiopians led captive in a manner so disgraceful to the prowess of their nation, how could they expect help from that quarter to prevent the Assyrians from coming down upon themselves ? H. C.

The inscriptions of an Assyrian king who reigned shortly after Tiglath-pileser illustrate several passages of Scripture, more especially Isa. 20 : 1-5 ; 2 K. 17 : 6 ; 18 : 10 and 20 : 12. The name of this monarch is read as Sargina or Sar-kina, and the time of his reign is fixed by the Assyrian canon to the years B.C. 722-705. As Isaiah flourished from about B.C. 750 to 698, Sargina must have been contemporary with him ; and as there is no other name at all like Sargina in the Assyrian royal lists, it is impossible to doubt that the monarch in question is identical with the "Sargon, king of Assyria," here mentioned (verse 1) by Isaiah as a contemporary. That mention of an Assyrian king named Sargon had, until the Assyrian inscriptions were deciphered, received no confirmation at all from profane history. The occurrence of the name once, and once only, in Isaiah, and not at all in Kings or Chronicles,

was commonly felt as a difficulty ; and it was generally assumed that the monarch so called must have borne also one of the names assigned to Assyrian sovereigns in the Book of Kings—that he must, in fact, have been either Shalmaneser, or Sennacherib, or Esarhaddon. The inscriptions of Sargina, and other Assyrian documents, have now shown that he was a distinct monarch from any of them, and that his reign of seventeen years intervened between those of Shalmaneser and Sennacherib, the former of whom ceased to reign in B.C. 722, while the latter ascended the throne in B.C. 705. Sennacherib tells us in all his inscriptions that he was Sargina's son ; and Sargina is shown by the Assyrian canon to have succeeded Shalmaneser. The history which Isaiah attaches to the name of Sargon also exactly accords with the annals of Sargina.

Egypt was at this time closely connected with Ethiopia, which under Piankhi, Shabak, Shabatok, and Tirhakah, exercised the rights of a suzerain power, permitting, however, to certain native Egyptian princes a delegated sovereignty. Hence the close connection in which we find Ethiopia and Egypt placed in the present prophecy. In the year that the Assyrian Tartan, or commander-in-chief, took Ashdod, having been assigned the task by Sargon, king of Assyria, the successor of Shalmaneser IV. and father of Sennacherib—probably the year B.C. 714—Isaiah was directed to renew his warning against trust in these African powers. They had become the "glory" and the "expectation" of his countrymen, whither they were ready to "flee for help" (verses 5, 6). In order to impress the Jews with the folly of their vain hopes, Isaiah was instructed to announce a coming victory of Assyria over combined Egypt and Ethiopia, the result of which would be a great removal of captives, belonging to both nations, from the banks of the Nile to those of the Tigris, to the great "shame" of the conquered and the great glory of the conquerors. To arrest the attention of his nation, he was to take the garb of a prisoner himself, and to go barefoot and "naked"—i.e., clad in a single scant tunic, for three years, at the end of which time his prophecy would be accomplished. The prophecy seems to have had its first accomplishment when, in B.C. 711, Ashdod revolted from Assyria, under promise of support from the Ethiopian Pharaoh of the period, and was captured, with its garrison, which is likely to have consisted in part of Egyptians and Ethiopians. We are expressly told that the prisoners were on this occasion trans-

ported into Assyria, their place being supplied by captives taken in some of Sargon's eastern wars. G. R.

2. Naked and barefoot. Those are said to be naked in the Scripture phrase who go without their upper garment, or have put off the habit proper to their station or quality. Going barefoot was a sign of mourning. *Walterland.*

3. Isaiah received this commission in the same year in which this siege commenced. The duration of the siege is not stated, but it is supposed to have been three years, so that Isaiah's walking naked and barefoot continued

to be a sign and wonder until his prediction was fulfilled in the capture of the city by Sargon and in his treatment of his Egyptian and Ethiopian prisoners. H. C.

5. The meaning of the verse is, that they who had relied on Egypt and its ally Ethiopia for aid against Assyria, whether Jews or Philistines or both, should be confounded at beholding Egypt and Ethiopia themselves subdued.

6. *And how shall we (ourselves) escape?* The disappointment described in the foregoing verse is now expressed by those who felt it. If the protectors were subdued, what must become of the protected? A.

ISAIAH, CHAPTERS XXI., XXII.

BURDENS OF BABYLON, DUMAH (EDOM), ARABIA AND JERUSALEM.

21 : 1 THE burden of the wilderness of the sea.

As whirlwinds in the South sweep through, it cometh from the wilderness, from a terrible
2 land. A grievous vision is declared unto me ; the treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously,
and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Elam ; besiege, O Media ; all the sighing thereof have I
3 made to cease. Therefore are my loins filled with anguish ; pangs have taken hold upon me,
as the pangs of a woman in travail : I am pained so that I cannot hear ; I am dismayed so
4 that I cannot see. My heart panteth, horror hath affrighted me : the twilight that I desired
5 hath been turned into trembling unto me. They prepare the table, they set the watch, they
6 eat, they drink : rise up, ye princes, anoint the shield. For thus hath the Lord said unto
7 me, Go, set a watchman ; let him declare what he seeth : and when he seeth a troop, horse-
men in pairs, a troop of asses, a troop of camels, he shall hearken diligently with much heed.
8 And he cried as a lion : O Lord, I stand continually upon the watch-tower in the day-time,
9 and am set in my ward whole nights : and, behold, here cometh a troop of men, horsemen in
pairs. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen ; and all the graven images of
10 her gods are broken unto the ground. O thou my threshing, and the corn of my floor : that
which I have heard from the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you.

11 The burden of Dumah.

One calleth unto me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the
12 night? The watchman said, the morning cometh, and also the night : if ye will inquire,
inquire ye : turn ye, come.

13 The burden upon Arabia.

In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye travelling companies of Dedanites. Unto him
that was thirsty they brought water ; the inhabitants of the land of Tema did meet the fugi-
15 tives with their bread. For they fled away from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from
16 the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war. For thus hath the Lord said unto me,
Within a year, according to the years of an hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail :
17 and the residue of the number of the archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall
be few ; for the LORD, the God of Israel, hath spoken it.

22:1 The burden of the valley of vision.

2 What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the housetops? O thou that art full of shoutings, a tumultuous city, a joyous town; thy slain are not slain with the sword, 3 neither are they dead in battle. All thy rulers fled away together, they were bound by the 4 archers: all that were found of thee were bound together, they fled afar off. Therefore said I, Look away from me, I will weep bitterly; labour not to comfort me, for the spoiling 5 of the daughter of my people. For it is a day of discomfiture, and of treading down, and of perplexity, from the Lord, the LORD of hosts, in the valley of vision; a breaking down of the 6 walls, and a crying to the mountains. And Elam bare the quiver, with chariots of men and 7 horsemen; and Kir uncovered the shield. And it came to pass, that thy choicest valleys 8 were full of chariots, and the horsemen set themselves in array at the gate. And he took away the covering of Judah; and thou didst look in that day to the armour in the house of 9 the forest. And ye saw the breaches of the city of David, that they were many: and ye 10 gathered together the waters of the lower pool. And ye numbered the houses of Jerusalem, 11 and ye brake down the houses to fortify the wall. Ye made also a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool: but ye looked not unto him that had done this, neither 12 had ye respect unto him that fashioned it long ago. And in that day did the Lord, the LORD of hosts, call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: 13 and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: 14 let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. And the LORD of hosts revealed himself in mine ears, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts.

15 Thus saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, 16 which is over the house, and say, What doest thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out here a sepulchre? hewing him out a sepulchre on high, gravating an habitation for himself in the rock! Behold, the LORD will hurl thee away violently as a *strong* 17 man; yea, he will wrap thee up closely. He will surely turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country; there shalt thou die, and there shall be the chariots of thy glory, thou shame 18 of thy lord's house. And I will thrust thee from thine office, and from thy station shall he 19 pull thee down. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim 20 the son of Hilkiah: and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants 21 of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. 22 And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a throne of glory to his 23 father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, every small vessel, from the vessels of cups even to all the vessels of 24 flags. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall the nail that was fastened in a sure place give way; and it shall be hewn down, and fall, and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off; for the LORD hath spoken it.

Chap. 21. As three of the verses of this chapter begin with the word *burden* (verses 1, 11, 13), it is now commonly supposed to consist of three distinct prophecies. It is also agreed that the first of these (verses 1-10) relates to the conquest of Babylon by the Medes and Persians; the second (verses 11, 12) either to Edom or the Arabian tribe Dumah, and the third (verses 13-17) to another Arabian tribe or to Arabia in general. The second and third of these divisions are admitted by the recent German writers to be composed by Isaiah himself, while the first is with almost equal unanimity declared to be the product of a later age. This

critical judgment, as in other cases, is founded partly on alleged diversities of phraseology, but chiefly on the wonderful coincidences with history both sacred and profane, which could not be ascribed to Isaiah or to any contemporary writer, without conceding the reality of prophetic inspiration. There is nothing in the reasoning of such writers to shake the faith of any who do not hold their fundamental principle of unbelief. In the next place, this hypothesis entirely fails to account for the minute agreement of the prophecy with history in circumstances, which must therefore be explained away by forced constructions and interpreta-

tions. Taking the language in its obvious meaning and excluding all gratuitous assumptions, we shall be constrained to look upon this passage as one of the most striking instances of strict agreement between prophecy and history. A.

CONQUEST OF BABYLON.

Verses 1-10.

As the whirlwinds rush up from the desert, so a mysterious terror seizes upon the prophet's spirit. A grievous vision passes before him; an awful voice is heard, summoning his attention to the metropolis of the world, the vast and populous stronghold of Babylon, on the distant Mesopotamian plains. Nay, the air grows full of voices, the darkness of mysterious shapes which come and go, so that he can see nothing clearly, nor hear any distinct and sequent utterance. At last the darkness opens, the curtains of the night are drawn aside, and through the rift he beholds a stately palace blazing with lights and ringing with the sounds of revelry. 'Tis the palace of Belshazzar, the despot of Babylon, who gives a banquet to a thousand of his lords. As he gazes on this strange scene, the prophet reports what he sees: "They cover the table. They set the watch," that they may revel on undisturbed. "They eat. They drink." The orgie is at its height when, lo, a voice quick with alarm peals through the hall, uttering the familiar battle-cry, "Arise, O ye princes! Anoint the shield!" Gazing more eagerly than ever to discover the cause and issue of this appalling cry, the whole scene melts from the prophet's view, the lights are extinguished, the palace with its flushed revellers disappear, and he is left on his windy watch-tower, racked with terror and suspense. Still he gazes—how can he but gaze?—into the darkness that enshrouds the city. And, as he gazes, he detects shadows moving swiftly through the darkness. The starlight faintly gleams from spear and shield. He becomes aware that a mighty host is advancing, under cover of night, against the city in which the king was banqueting with his lords. He can make out the splendid Median cavalry, riding "in pairs," and the Persians with their long array of camels. And now he knows that the Medes and Persians of Cyrus have plunged down from their mountain fastnesses, and are about to assault the mighty city of the plains, which has gathered into itself the wealth of the world. But once more the thick darkness closes over the scene, a darkness in which there is no

voice or sound. The suspense grows intolerable to him, when, once more, the darkness lifts, and the air trembles with a shout of victory. He looks, and sees the Median cavalry riding out of the city which they have captured, clashing their shields and brandishing their spears. He listens, and, behold, they cry, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and all their gods are dashed to the ground!" This is our first picture from Isaiah; and surely it conveys to us, as no mere history could do, the blended astonishment, terror, joy, with which the ancient world heard of the fall of that mighty Babylonian empire, which seemed founded forever, before the assault of the rude and almost unknown hill-tribes of Persia. It was this overwhelming and incredible event by which the captivity of Zion was turned and the exiles of Israel were set free to return to their native and beloved land.

1. Wilderness of the sea. As Babylon was a large and most fertile inland plain, no name could at first seem more inappropriate to it; it was not "a sea," or near the sea; it was not a wilderness, for of all lands it was the most prolific of grain. That the name was nevertheless appropriate we may infer from the fact that Herodotus (i. 184) speaks of this vast fertile plain in similar terms. The plain on which Babylon stood ran at the south into the Arabian desert, and owed its amazing fertility to the innumerable fountains and springs which rose up in it, and to the great rivers which flowed through it. Of these the mighty Euphrates, fed by the mountain snows and rains which poured into it through a thousand affluents, used annually to overflow the whole land, transforming it into a sea, until the great Assyrian despots cut their canals and constructed the massive dams which held the river within its bounds. "Wilderness of the sea," therefore, was probably an ancient name, and was certainly no inappropriate name, for the Babylonian plain. *Cox.*

2. "Go up, Elam," for the Lord of hosts commissions thee to this work of conquest and spoil: "besiege, O Media;" and let the proud city fall. All the sighing which that most oppressive power has caused to the nations she conquered, and especially to My people, the Jews, shall now cease. Elam is another name for Persia, being its largest province. The naming of these very nations that were to conquer Babylon, nearly two centuries before the event, is one of the undeniable attestations of real prophecy. H. C.

3, 4. The prophet's fine humanity, sensitive

to all human woe, carries him for the time beyond the range of merely personal or national feeling. Among the captives whose sighs have entered into the heart of the Almighty King are thousands of Isaiah's own race; the Jews are in bondage to Babylon, a bondage most bitter and degrading. *They* therefore will be delivered, *their* bonds will be broken, *their* sighs will be changed to mirthful songs, when Babylon, the mistress and despot of the world, is smitten down. And yet the Hebrew prophet, rejoicing in the joy of his people, is convulsed with anguish as he anticipates the judgment which is to set them free. *Cox.*

5. The Hebrew tense is different in the two clauses, but the imperative in English alone gives the true emphasis of both. The table of the royal banquet is prepared. "Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and drank wine before the thousand." The guests are ready to sit down, when the watch, after the custom, is set at the gates of the city. The feast begins, they eat, they drink, in unsuspecting revelry. *Birks.*

6-9. The structure of the passage is highly dramatic. In the sixth verse, the prophet is commanded to set a watch. In the seventh, the sentinel is ordered to look out for an army of men, mounted on horses, camels and asses. In the eighth, he reports himself as being at his post. In the ninth, he sees the very army which had been described approaching. *Answer* is used, both in Greek and Hebrew, for the resumption of discourse by the same speaker, especially after an interval. It is here equivalent to *spoke again*. During the interval implied, the city is supposed to have been taken, so that when the watchman speaks again, it is to say that Babylon is fallen. The omission of all the intermediate details, for the purpose of bringing the extremes together, is a masterly stroke of poetical description, which would never have occurred to an inferior writer. *A.*

7. The fulfilment of this prophecy is wonderfully definite. Xenophon represents the Persians as advancing two by two in pairs as here said; and although no other people are known to have used camels and asses for cavalry service, yet both Herodotus and Xenophon testify that the Persians used them, partly or wholly, to frighten the horses of their enemies. *H. C.*

9. This then is the issue of that mysterious conflict, the dim apprehension of which shook the prophet's soul with an intolerable dread; this is the light that arose upon him out of that great darkness—the great empire of wrong de-

stroyed, her captives set free, their sighs exchanged for rapturous songs.

10. *Oh my threshing and the son of my threshing-floor! What I have heard from Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, I have told you.* This part of the prophecy closes with an apostrophe, showing at once by whose power and for whose sake the downfall of Babylon was to be brought about. Though the terms here used are scarcely intelligible when literally rendered into English, it is clear that they mean, *oh my oppressed and afflicted people*, and must therefore be addressed to the Jews, to whom the fall of Babylon would bring deliverance, and for whose consolation this prediction was originally uttered. The last clause assures them that their own God had sent this message to them. *A.*

And now what lesson are *we* to learn from this ode? It should perhaps be lesson enough that we have found a Scripture before dark grow full of light. But if other lessons be desired, let us take these two, and think them out and apply them for ourselves. 1. If the ode teaches anything, it teaches that however sorry and reluctant God may be to afflict the children of men, He will not spare a single stroke so long as they cling to the evils which degrade and destroy them. 2. If it teaches anything, it teaches that His design in judging and afflicting us is always most merciful; that He has no pleasure in our sufferings; that He simply intends them to separate the evil in us from the good, to make us perfect, and to fit us for an eternal blessedness. If we love evil in any form, if we habitually do that which is wrong, we may hide our evil habit from men, but we cannot hide it from God; nor can we evade the searching judgments by which He seeks to free us from our bonds. And when the doom falls, when the Divine judgment searches us through and through, we are to remember that God is not so much angry with *us* as with the evil that is in us; we are to remember that He loves us, and because He loves us, will make us quit our evil; we are to remember that He can only lift His judgments from us as we renounce our sins. *Cox.*

THE BURDEN OF DUMAH.

Verses 11, 12.

These verses are deeply enigmatic—probably with design. The name "Dumah" probably is a slight modification of the word Edom, or Idumea. Seir is but another name for Edom. The man who calls to the prophet to learn the fate of his people accosts the prophet as a

watchman foreseeing the future of nations, and asks, "What of the night?" to be construed either thus: What can you tell us about this terrible night of calamity now pressing upon us? or perhaps in this way, reaching the same ultimate sense: How far along are we in this awful night, and when may we look for day? To this the watchman responds, "Morning comes and night too: if you wish to inquire, ask on; come and ask again." All this is at least very indefinite. Yet we can scarcely put any other construction upon it than this: Morning will come to the people of God; but no morning comes to *you*; nothing but the dark night of death. H. C.

Why has the watchman no better answer for the inquiry from Dumah? Simply because it comes from a race which has no habitual dealings with God. If Edom wants an answer from God in its hour of anxiety or of distress, it must begin by coming over to God's side, and incorporating itself with the people of His choice and of His adoption.

How often, in these times, do we find persons utterly irreligious and worldly, entering into questions concerning God and His truth, concerning revelation, inspiration, miracle and prophecy, as though they had a right to all the enlightenment and comfort and assurance which the saints of God have for their guidance and upholding. The cry comes from Dumah, it echoes across the ridge of Seir, it sounds in the ear of the solitary watchman on the afflicted heights of Zion, "Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night?" Tell me, thou man of God, how stands the matter between faith and scepticism? Give me on the instant, give me in brief compass, in terms concise and conclusive, a reason for the hope that is in thee and for the faith once delivered to the saints! Assure me of the eternal verities brought to earth by One who had seen them and even framed them in heaven, and then send me back—for I am in haste—into the world which I love, or into the sin which I cherish, a firm believer, a hopeful, happy Christian, as safe for eternity as tranquil for time! What saith the answer of God to the demand thus addressed to Him? "The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come." To the careless questioner all truth is an enigma. Yes, day comes, and then night again. "Ye will inquire?" Inquire ye! Yes, ask all your questions; go, and come again; spend your day in slumber, your night in pleasure; and yet put in between times your half-meant, half-jesting questions, "What is truth?

and evidence what? and what the Bible?" if ye will inquire, inquire ye; but the response must at last be a riddle to him who so questions! Not in the tone of ridicule—God forbid—and not in the spirit of arrogance, as though the watchman cared not for the miseries of Edom; but rather for the sake of Edom—because such questioning cannot profit—because an answer to such questioning could be only for evil—because it is not well for man that he should combine God and the world, a frivolous life with a calm assurance of salvation—are the words here written, and do we seek so to use them, as if a prepared mind were a first condition of religious knowledge, an earnest resolution after God, a necessary prerequisite for the study of His truth and the reception of His salvation. C. J. Vaughan.

THE BURDEN OF ARABIA.

Verses 13-17.

13-17. Arabia lay eastward and southward of the land of Canaan; much of it was possessed by the posterity of Abraham. The Dedanim here mentioned (verse 13) descended from Dedan, Abraham's son by Keturah; the inhabitants of Tema and Kedar descended from Ishmael (Gen. 25:3, 13, 15). The Arabians generally lived in tents and kept cattle, were a hardy people, inured to labor; probably the Jews depended upon them as a sort of a wall between them and the more warlike eastern nations, and therefore, to alarm them, they shall hear "the burden of Arabia," and see it sinking under its own burden. H.

Arabia was a lodging-place rather than a home for its wandering tribes. The caravans of Dedanites are the companies of trading Arabs, descended from Dedan, son of Midian, whose route lay from Damascus to the south of Arabia. *Birks.*

13. The country was to be in such a state that the caravans which usually travelled undisturbed would be obliged to leave the public road and pass the night among the bushes or thickets, which seems to be here (and perhaps originally) the meaning. Forests properly so called do not exist in the Arabian desert. The Dedanim are mentioned elsewhere in connection with Edom and Teman (Jer. 49:8; Ezek. 25:13), to whom they were probably contiguous. Their precise situation is the less important as they are not the subjects of the prophecy, but spoken of as strangers passing through, the interruption of whose journey is mentioned as a proof of the condition of the country. A.

17. The last clause intimates that God, as the God of Israel, has a quarrel with Kedar, and at the same time that His power and omniscience will secure the fulfilment of the threatening. It is not impossible that future discoveries may yet throw light upon these brief and obscure prophecies. A.

THE WOE ON JERUSALEM.

Chap. 22. This chapter records a *prophetic burden of calamity on Jerusalem*. In a series of prophetic burdens on guilty nations and cities—Babylon, Moab, Damascus, Samaria, Egypt and Arabia—a city so guilty as Jerusalem could not be passed by. It is called “the valley of vision,” as being the home of many inspired prophets and the subject of many Divine visions. It is called “the valley of vision,” as some suppose with reference to its geographical position, encompassed by mountains. There is special pertinence in this allusion to her “visions,” because the great light she had from God was a chief element in her guilt. The chapter is peculiar for its special prophecies respecting two individuals, men of prominence—viz., Shebna and Eliakim, the former noted for his wickedness, pride and pernicious influence, and the latter for his fidelity both to God and to his country, and for his great usefulness in bearing public responsibilities. Since these persons, or at least persons bearing these names, appear in the history during Hezekiah’s reign (Isa. 36 : 3), it can scarcely be doubted that the prophet alludes to them, and hence that the siege of Jerusalem here predicted occurred within their lifetime. H. C.

This chapter naturally falls into two parts. The first describes the conduct of the people of Jerusalem during a siege (verses 1-14). The second predicts the removal of Shebna from his post as treasurer or steward of the royal household (verses 15-25). The whole may then be described as a prophecy against the people of Jerusalem in general, and against Shebna in particular, considered as their leader and example. If the whole must be applied to one specific point of time, it is probably the taking of Jerusalem by the king of Assyria in the days of Manasseh, when the latter was himself carried captive with his chief men, and Shebna possibly among the rest. The choice seems to lie between this hypothesis and that of a generic prediction, a prophetic picture of the conduct of the Jews in a certain conjuncture of affairs which happened more than once, particular strokes of the description being drawn from different memorable sieges, and especially

from those of Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar. A.

1. As usual, the prophet strikes boldly into the heart of his theme. His prophetic eye sees the city in strange commotion, and he cries out, What has befallen thee? What can have happened, that the whole people throng the house-tops? Oriental houses are built with flat roofs made easily accessible from the inner court. Hence these roofs are places of frequent resort for various purposes. H. C.—From verses 4 and 5 it is plain that it was a time of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity; which naturally suggests the idea that the inhabitants had rushed to the tops of the houses to get a sight of those chariots and horsemen of Elam and Kir, with whom their choice valleys were full, and who were thundering against the gates of the city. *Thomson*.

5. In the original, the words rendered “by the Lord God of hosts,” are closely connected, not with “perplexity,” but with “day;” so that the sense is, This is *the Lord’s day* for troubling, trampling down and confounding that guilty city, the valley of vision. This day the Lord has brought upon them in righteous judgment, and it is therefore said to belong to the Lord, the Lord’s own day. It is a day of undermining walls and of outcries that send their echoes far off to the mountains. Some suppose that “*To the mountains*” are the very words of the outcry.

6. This means that the men of Elam (which represents Persia) and the men of Kir were in the besieging army. Kir, supposed to be the modern Kur, was a country on the river Cyrus, to which the Assyrians bore their captives from Syria (2 K. 16 : 9), a fact which shows that this was a subject province. The same is true of Elam. Hence both these countries were doubtless represented in the armies of Assyria.

11. Their great sin comes to view here. It was not that they had fortified the city, but that they had *not* also, and much more even, *looked to God*, the Maker of the city, who had laid its ancient foundations. There is a tacit antithesis in the form of expression: They *had* looked to the arsenal (verse 8) and to the breaches of the walls (verse 9), but they had *not* looked to Him who had made all, to whom they should have looked first and chiefly. H. C.

13. *And behold mirth and jollity, slaying of oxen and killing of sheep, eating of flesh and drinking of wine; eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.* This verse presents the contrast of their actual behavior with that to which God

called them by His providence. It has been disputed whether these last words are expressive of contemptuous incredulity or of a desperate determination to spend the residue of life in pleasure. It is by no means clear that these two feelings are exclusive of each other, since the same man might express his disbelief of the threatening, and his resolution, if it should prove true, to die in the enjoyment of his favorite indulgences. At all events, there can be no need of restricting the full import of the language, as adapted to express both states of mind, in different persons, if not in the same. A.

12-14. This passage is introduced with a loud and pressing call to repentance. It describes the contemptuous behavior of the people to whom the call was addressed, and concludes with an alarming denunciation of wrath against those perverse and obstinate transgressors. There is no room to suppose that they had given no attention to the message delivered by the prophet. It would rather appear that they had attended to it with accuracy, nay, studied its meaning, on purpose to counteract it; for a contrast so minutely exact, a scheme of contradiction so completely adjusted, could hardly have been stumbled upon by mere accident. And indeed the latter part of the verse puts this beyond all doubt. "*Let us eat and drink,*" said they, "*for to-morrow we shall die.*" They meant it as a scoff, a turning into ridicule the warning they had received, but which they did not believe. The prophet hath been telling us of desolating judgments just at hand, and with the same breath he calls us to weeping, and mourning, and girding with sackcloth. How absurd, how unreasonably cruel is the demand! Will not the evil day come soon enough, though we should not anticipate the sorrows of it, by afflicting ourselves unnecessarily before its arrival? Nay, rather, if life is to be cut short, let us make the most of it while it lasts. If we must die to-morrow, let us eat and drink, and be merry to-day. By their scoffing reply to the call that was given them, in the name of the Lord God of hosts, they said in effect, with insolent contempt and proud defiance, "Let him make speed and hasten His work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it." The prophet therefore proclaims, as on the housetop, what God had revealed in his ears, that from that time forward vengeance should pursue those impious men, till, like their rebellious forefathers, whose carcasses fell in the wilder-

ness, they should be utterly consumed from off the face of the earth. R. W.

15. At this point the "burden" becomes personal, pertaining first to a man by the name of Shebna, and next to another by the name of Eliakim. Both these names appear in the history of Hezekiah (36 : 3), representing men of prominent official positions. It appears here that they were strong contrasts in character. H. C.—From the people in general the threatening now passes to an individual, no doubt because he was particularly guilty of the crime alleged, and by his influence the means of leading others astray likewise. The phrase *this treasurer* may either be expressive of disapprobation or contempt, or simply designate the man as well known to the prophet and his readers. These familiar allusions to things and persons now forgotten, while they add to the obscurity of the passage, furnish an incidental proof of its antiquity and genuineness.

19. *And it shall come to pass in that day that I will call for My servant, for Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah—i.e.,* will personally designate him. Eliakim appears again in chap. 36 : 3, and there as here in connection with Shebna. The epithet *My servant* seems to be intended to describe him as a faithful follower of Jehovah, and as such to contrast him with Shebna, who may have been a heathen.

21. *Father* is not a mere Oriental synonym of *ruler*, but an emphatic designation of a wise and benevolent ruler. It seems therefore to imply that Shebna's administration was of an opposite character. The inhabitants of Jerusalem and the family of Judah comprehend the whole nation.

22. In other words, he shall have unlimited control over the royal house and household, which, according to Oriental usages, implies a high political authority. The application of the same terms to Peter (Matt. 16 : 19) and to Christ Himself (Rev. 3 : 7) does not prove that they here refer to either, or that Eliakim was a type of Christ, but merely that the same words admit of different applications. A.

23. Two figures are used here to represent the stability and fidelity of Eliakim. He is this tent-pin on which all the glory of his father's house—all the offspring, great and small, high and low—hang in dependence; and he is also a seat of honor ("glorious throne") for them all to sit upon. His name is a tower of strength and of respectability to them all.

25. Most commentators agree therefore that

this figure must be transferred to Shebna, as much as to say : Shebna has had these very responsibilities upon himself, but he utterly failed to bear them faithfully ; hence the nail came out ; everything hung upon it fell, and great was the fall thereof. This was what the Lord had said. The event fulfilled His word.
H. C.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXIII.

BURDEN OF TYRE AND ZIDON.

23:1 THE burden of Tyre.

Howl, ye ships of Tarshish ; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in : 2 from the land of Kittim it is revealed to them. Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle ; thou 3 whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished. And on great waters the seed of Shihor, the harvest of the Nile, was her revenue ; and she was the mart of 4 nations. Be thou ashamed, O Zidon : for the sea hath spoken, the strong hold of the sea, saying, I have not travailed, nor brought forth, neither have I nourished young men, nor 5 brought up virgins. When the report cometh to Egypt, they shall be sorely pained at the 6, 7 report of Tyre. Pass ye over to Tarshish ; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle. Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days, whose feet carried her afar off to sojourn ? 8 Who hath purposed this against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, 9 whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth ? The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to 10 stain the pride of all glory, to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth. Pass through thy land as the Nile, O daughter of Tarshish ; there is no girdle *about thee* any 11 more. He hath stretched out his hand over the sea, he hath shaken the kingdoms : the LORD 12 hath given commandment concerning Canaan, to destroy the strong holds thereof. And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin daughter of Zidon : arise, pass 13 over to Kittim ; even there shalt thou have no rest. Behold, the land of the Chaldeans ; this people is no more ; the Assyrian hath appointed it for the beasts of the wilderness ; they set 14 up their towers, they overthrew the palaces thereof ; he made it a ruin. Howl, ye ships of 15 Tarshish : for your strong hold is laid waste. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king : after the end of 16 seventy years it shall be unto Tyre as in the song of the harlot. Take an harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten ; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou 17 mayest be remembered. And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, that the LORD will visit Tyre, and she shall return to her hire, and shall play the harlot with all the 18 kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth. And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the LORD : it shall not be treasured nor laid up ; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.

TYRE and Zidon, great and ancient maritime cities of Phœnicia—Tyre the greater, but Zidon the more ancient—were situated on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean and very near the northwest corner of the Canaan occupied by Israel. They come into notice frequently in the Scriptures, both in history and in prophecy. They were specially distinguished for their commerce and their consequent commercial relations with their colonies on the islands and coasts of the Mediterranean. Indeed, at some periods these commercial relations reached every known country of the world. H. C.

The student of the Old Testament is constantly surprised to find such abundant references to this great city in the prophetic writings, and especially to note the numerous and specific predictions concerning Tyre in Holy Writ. Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah, speaking by Divine direction, have placed such predictions on record, and with a fulness and emphasis which hardly have a

parallel in the prophetic declarations respecting any other city or people, except Jerusalem and the chosen Hebrew race. The five prophets are named in their historic order, according to the received chronology, and the particular references are as follows: Amos 1:9, 10; Isa. 23, especially verses 15-18; Jer. 25:22; 27:3; Ezek., chaps. 26, 27 and 28 entire, and 29:18; Zech. 9:2-4. See also prophecies in which Tyre and Zidon are associated in a common condemnation, Jer. 47:4; Joel 3:4-8, and others. Note also the instructive allusions in Ps. 45:12; 83:7; 87:4, indicating the close relations between Tyre and Israel. See for further historic reference 1 K. 7:13, 14; 9:11-14; Ezra 3:7; Neh. 13:16; Hos. 9:13, and the impressive allusion of Christ, Matt. 11:21, 22. *E. D. Morris.*

This burden, from its clear prediction of a distant future, has had its genuineness denied by some modern critics. But all the internal evidence of connection and style, as well as all the external, proves it to be Isaiah's. The burdens are a series, of which this of Tyre, the one great maritime power of those days, is the last. So in chap. 2:16, the objects of judgment last named are "all ships of Tarshish, and all desirable merchandise," while in chap. 11:11, "the isles of the sea" close the list of places from which Israel are to return. This burden has also many internal links with those before it. Its opening and closing sentences begin the burden of Moab. The howling of Moab is mentioned six times, and the same word is found three times in this message to Tyre. The form of the phrase "so that there is no house, no entering in," is the same as in the burden of Damascus, "so that it is no city." The repetition, "the sea, the strength of the sea," is like chap. 19:7, "by the river, by the mouth of the river." The title "joyous city" is common with the last burden, and the phrase in chap. 5:11 is the keynote of three earlier visions (5:25; 9:12; 10:4; 14:24, 27). The last words of 5:13 answer to the sentence on Damascus, "it shall be a heap, a ruin." The promise at the close resembles those in the burdens of Damascus, Egypt and the valley of vision. The language is "terse, highly figurative, and sublime," quite in the style of Isaiah, and unlike any later writer (Hend.). *Birks.*

This prophecy consists of two parts. The first predicts the fall of Tyre (verses 1-14). The second promises its restoration and conversion (verses 15-18). The fall of Tyre is predicted, not directly, but in the form of apostrophes, addressed to her own people or

her colonies (verses 1-7). The destruction is referred to God as its Author, and to the Chaldees as His instruments (verses 8-14). The prediction in the latter part includes three events. Tyre shall be forsaken and forgotten for seventy years (verse 15). She shall then be restored to her former activity and wealth (verses 16, 17). Thenceforth her gains shall be devoted to the Lord (verse 18).

Tyre, one of the chief cities of Phœnicia, was situated partly on a rocky island near the coast, and partly in a wide and fertile plain upon the coast itself. Hengstenberg has made it probable that from the beginning the chief part of the city was situated on the island, or rather a peninsula connected with the mainland by a narrow isthmus. Tyre is remarkable in history for two things—its maritime trade, and the many sieges it has undergone. The first of these on record was by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, who, according to Menander, a historian now lost, but quoted by Josephus, blockaded Tyre for five years, so as to cut off the supply of water from the mainland, but without being able to reduce the city. The next was by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who besieged it thirteen years; with what result is not expressly mentioned either in profane or sacred history. A third siege was by Alexander the Great, who after seven months and with the utmost difficulty finally reduced it. It was afterward besieged by the Syrian king Antigonos, and more than once during the Crusades, both by Franks and Saracens. After this period it entirely decayed, and has now disappeared, its site being marked by the insulated rock, by the causeway between it and the mainland still existing as a bar of sand, and by columns and other architectural remains mostly lying under water.

It has been much disputed which of these events is the subject of the prophecy before us. But the great body of the older writers refer it to the siege by Nebuchadnezzar. The arguments in favor of this application are stated with great learning, force and clearness by Vitrina on the passage. A.

1. The message begins with a call to the Tyrian merchants and sailors, far away from their home, to mourn over the ruin of their city. Tarshish is Tartessus in Spain, one chief emporium of Tyrian commerce. Ships of Tarshish thus became a title for all vessels used for long voyages. Chittim is Cyprus, and the sea-coasts of the east of Europe. The mariners, returning homeward, mourn at the tidings of Tyre's calamity. *Birks.*—The

prophet calls on them to wail because Tyre is so completely destroyed that there remains no house and no harbor. They learn this sad news at the land of Chittim, supposed to be the island of Cyprus. It is known that Tyre had a colony there. H. C.

2. "Merchants of Zidon" is a generic term for those of Phœnicia; since either Tyre or Zidon fitly represents the whole nation. *Birks.*

3. Over the great waters come to her the grains of Egypt, the harvests of the Nile. She is a great emporium for the nations. H. C.

4. The prophet hears a voice from the sea, which he then describes more exactly as coming from the stronghold or fortress of the sea—*i.e.*, insular Tyre as viewed from the mainland. The rest of the verse is intended to express the idea that the city thus personified was childless; was as if she had never borne children. A.

6. Pass over the sea, ye people of Tyre, to Tarshish (Tartessus in Spain) for safety. They did so to some extent no doubt during the siege by Nebuchadnezzar, and yet more in the siege by Alexander the Great. The prophecy refers mainly to the former. H. C.

7. The people of Tyre boasted of their high antiquity. Their priests told Herodotus that their temple of Hercules had lasted twenty-three hundred years. These proud boastings would give double force to the prophet's warning. Where all had been pride and vain security, there would soon be trembling flight, silence and desolation. The Tyrians would escape to remote settlements. "Her own feet" is an expressive figure for the Tyrian navy, by which this merchant city was accustomed to travel swiftly to distant lands.

8, 9. Tyre might well be called "the crowning city," or giver of crowns, because of the many kings she set up in the various Phœnician colonies. And by her commerce and wealth she might be said to supply garlands of grace and beauty to all the other nations. The fall of a city so ancient and noble must have some very weighty cause. "The Lord of hosts purposed it," in order to accomplish a great end in His moral government of the world. *Birks.*—The plan and purpose were of God, who sought to stain the pride of man's glorying and to make light all the heavy men and things of earth. Such is the contrasted significance of these Hebrew verbs. Perhaps the rich were then as now accounted the "solid" men of society; but God would make them light, taking away their wealth and with it their honor and their pride.

11. "He" who "stretches out His hand" is the Lord. The Hebrew word for merchant is *canaan*, one who gets money. The meaning is that God had given command respecting the city of *canaan* (the merchant)—*viz.*, Tyre, to destroy her strongholds.

13. The far-reaching ken of prophetic vision saw this Chaldean people, the future conquerors of Tyre, before they became a power among the nations. This reference to Chaldea shows that the prophecy refers to the conquest of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, and not to the earlier assault upon it by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria; nor to the later, a real destruction, by Alexander the Great. H. C.—When Isaiah wrote, Assyria was the ruling power of the world; whatever changes were expected, were expected from that quarter. But here the conquest of Phœnicia is ascribed to a people then but little known, if known at all. It was perfectly natural, therefore, to say negatively that it was not to be effected by Assyria, as well as positively that it was to be effected by Chaldea.

15. The remainder of the chapter predicts the restoration of Tyre, not to its former dignity, but to its wealth and commercial activity, the fruits of which should thenceforth be consecrated to Jehovah. A.—Isaiah predicted that after a definite period—described as seventy years—Tyre should be restored again to something of its former magnificence. And surely it is a remarkable fact that within such a period the Chaldee-Babylonian dynasty, which Nebuchadnezzar had done so much to make historic, had been subverted by Cyrus; and that under the indulgent sway of Cyrus the inhabitants of Tyre were permitted to rebuild the insular city, and there to establish again in large degree those manufacturing and commercial interests which had been so long its peculiar glory. What the pen of prophecy had written two hundred years before actually came to pass, and at the very time specified; and for generations insular Tyre continued to flourish, as had been foretold. *E. D. Morris.*

"After the end of seventy years, according to the years of one king," or one dynasty, or family of kings, that of Nebuchadnezzar; when that expired, the desolations of Tyre came to an end. And we may presume that Cyrus, at the same time when he released the Jews and encouraged them to rebuild Jerusalem, released the Tyrians also, and encouraged them to rebuild Tyre. H.—Nebuchadnezzar began his conquests in the first year of his reign; from thence to the taking of Babylon by Cyrus are

the seventy years ; and these limit the duration of the Babylonish monarchy. *W. Lowth.*

17. After the end of seventy years.

Tyre is represented as a harlot, and from thence these figures are taken ; the meaning is, that she should recover her liberties and trade, and draw in all nations to deal with her. *Bp. Newton.*—According to the prophecy, the seventy years being expired, we find that the Tyrians were restored to their former privileges, and allowed a king of their own. This favor seems to have been granted them by Darius Hystaspes, in consideration of their usefulness to him in his naval wars ; they soon recovered their former prosperity, traffic, power, and riches, and were enabled, on Alexander's invading the East, to make a greater stand against him than all the Persian Empire beside. *Prideaux.*

18. And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord.

The prophet speaks here, not of what the Tyrians would do immediately on their restitution, but some time after, in the days of the Messiah. So that this is a prophecy concerning the conversion of the Tyrians to the true

religion, of the accomplishment of which something is said in Acts 21 : 3, 4, 5, and more in other authors. *Poole.*—Tyre, after its second destruction by Alexander, again recovered its ancient trade and grandeur. It became early Christian with the rest of the neighboring countries. Paul himself found many Christians there. It suffered much in Diocletian's persecution. *Lowth.*

The Bible contains a series of prophecies, clear, detailed, in many cases most startling in their nature, and in some cases altogether improbable—many would say incredible. The future history and final doom of nations, countries and cities are portrayed with singular clearness. No amount of political sagacity could have foreseen what is predicted ; no depth of philosophical speculation could have divined it ; no breadth of research could have discovered it ; and yet time has converted all those strange and varied and astounding prophecies of Jewish seers into facts which historians have recorded and travellers have witnessed. *J. L. Porter.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTERS XXIV., XXV.

24 : 1 BEHOLD, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest ; as with the servant, so with his master ; as with the maid, so with her mistress ; as with the buyer, so with the seller ; as with the lender, so with the borrower ; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The earth shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled ; for the LORD hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the lofty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is polluted under the inhabitants thereof ; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are found guilty : therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left. The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merryhearted do sigh. The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth. They shall not drink wine with a song ; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it. The city of confusion is broken down : every house is shut up, that no man may come in. There is a crying in the streets because of the wine ; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone. In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction. For thus shall it be in the midst of the earth among the peoples, as the shaking of an olive tree, as the grape gleanings when the vintage is done. These shall lift up their voice, they shall shout ; for the majesty of the LORD they cry aloud from the sea. Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the east, even the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, in the isles of the sea.

16 From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, glory to the righteous. But

I said, I pine away, I pine away, woe is me ! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously ; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously. Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit ; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare : for the windows on high are opened, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall stagger like a drunken man, and shall be moved to and fro like a hut ; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall, and not rise again.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed ; for the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

25 : 1 O LORD, thou art my God ; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name ; for thou hast done wonderful things, *even* counsels of old, in faithfulness *and* truth. For thou hast made of a city an heap ; of a defenced city a ruin : a palace of strangers to be no city ; it shall never be built. Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee. For thou hast been a strong hold to the poor, a strong hold to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. As the heat in a dry place shalt thou bring down the noise of strangers ; as the heat by the shadow of a cloud, the song of the terrible ones shall be brought low. And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering that is cast over all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He hath swallowed up death for ever ; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces ; and the reproach of his people shall he take away from off all the earth : for the LORD hath spoken it.

And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for him, and he will save us : this is the LORD ; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest, and Moab shall be trodden down in his place, even as straw is trodden down in the water of the dunghill. And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst thereof, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth *his* hands to swim : and he shall lay low his pride together with the craft of his hands. And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls hath he brought down, laid low, and brought to the ground, even to the dust.

THE next four chapters constitute one subject, and should be studied as one whole. It is a prophecy of those great providential events that clustered round the fall of the kingdom and capital of Judah. The desolations of Jerusalem and the captivity of the remnant of its population are in the foreground ; but farther back lies the fall of other great cities and kingdoms before the same Chaldean power ; and still more remotely, the fall of Babylon and of the sovereignty of Chaldea. That was an era of surpassing energy in those agencies of providence that operate the government of God over nations as such, and especially those which administer its retributions. The Lord came down most signally at that time to take in hand His own apostate people and scourge them for their correction and reformation. For this very reason, He could not let other nations, less guilty

only because less enlightened, pass altogether unpunished. Into this scene of vigorous retributive agencies, compassing the wide world in their sweep, these chapters introduce us, setting forth the fearfulness of this far-reaching devastation, but also the milder cast of the inflictions that fall on His own people, and the mingled consolations vouchsafed to them under their deepest afflictions ; the merciful designs of discipline, and the broad difference between the discipline that aims to purify and save on the one hand, and, on the other, the judgments that cut down the incorrigible, never to rise again. This prophecy is eminently rich in those gleams of light and joy that soften the gloom of the most appalling calamities ever brought of God upon His chosen people. It would seem that this is their great moral lesson—a precious one for the people of God in every age. H. C.

Here begins a series of prophecies (chaps. 24-35), having reference chiefly to Judah. It is not divided into parts by any titles or express intimations of a change of subject. The style is also homogeneous and uniform. The attempts which have been made to subdivide this portion of the book are for the most part arbitrary. The conventional division into chapters may be retained as a matter of convenience. The first four chapters (24-27) are now universally regarded as forming one continuous composition. What is said of chap. 24 is therefore in some degree applicable to the whole. This chapter contains a description of a country filled with confusion and distress by a visitation from Jehovah in consequence of its iniquities (verses 1-12). It then speaks of a remnant scattered among the nations and glorifying God in distant lands (verses 13-16). The prophet then resumes his description of the judgments coming on the same land or another, winding up with a prophecy of Jehovah's exaltation in Jerusalem (verses 16-23). . . . We have here another illustration of the value of the boasted modern criticism. Gesenius is confident that the prophecy was written in Babylon; Ewald and Knobel are equally confident that it was written in the Holy Land. Gesenius disparages the style as cold and artificial; Hitzig speaks of it with contempt as awkward, feeble and inelegant; Ewald treats it with respect as poetical and skilful, although not original; while Umbreit lauds it as a noble specimen of Hebrew poetry. In this case, as in others, each writer first determines upon general grounds the age of the production, and then confirms it by internal proofs. The points of resemblance to the undisputed writings of Isaiah are set down as plagiarisms or imitations. Ewald even goes so far as to mark certain passages as borrowed from older writers no longer extant. The paronomasias and other verbal peculiarities of the passage, instead of proving it the work of Isaiah, in whose acknowledged writings they are also found, prove the contrary because they are so numerous. In this way all proof of the genuineness of a disputed passage is rendered impossible. If it has not the usual characteristics of the author, it is therefore spurious; if it has, it is evidently an imitation. It is true, distinctions are made as to the number, good taste and connection; but they are always made at will, and so as to confirm the previous conclusion. Setting aside this empirical criticism as unworthy of attention, we may observe that the endless diversity of judgment, both among the older and later

writers, shows that the prediction is genuine. A.

It is agreed that here begins a new sermon, which is continued to the end of chap. 27. And in it the prophet, according to the directions he had received, does, in many precious promises, say "to the righteous, It shall be well with them;" and in many dreadful threatenings he says, "Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them" (3:10, 11); and these are interwoven, that they may illustrate each other. This chapter is mostly threatening; and as the judgments threatened are very sore and grievous ones, so the people threatened with those judgments are very many. It is not the burden of any particular city or kingdom, as those before, but the burden of the whole earth. II.

24:1. The figure is that of a bottle or other vessel drained of its contents by being turned upside down. The face is the upper part or mouth of the vessel. The last clause resolves the figure into literal expressions. Isaiah here speaks of the Babylonian conquest as still distant, but at the same time as infallibly certain. To avoid this conclusion, Gesenius denies that Isaiah was the author, and violates the usage of the language by translating this whole passage in the past tense. A.

4-6. The sentence of doom is seen taking effect, like the curse on the barren fig-tree. The vision is inexpressibly grand, solemn and mournful. Sin against God's everlasting laws is bearing its natural and certain fruits of sorrow and death. The whole frame of nature is polluted by the transgression of men. The rainbow had been given as the sign of a covenant forever between God and "every living creature of all flesh upon the earth." This covenant was now broken by the gross idolatry of the Gentiles, and even of Israel, the chosen people. Instead of seed-time and harvest, and joyful increase, there would thus be a curse of barrenness, wasting and desolation. *Birks.*

6. The "curse" which devoured the land ("ate up" is the Hebrew) naturally refers to those fearful curses which God through Moses denounced against idolatry and apostasy. (See De. 27 and 28.) The verb rendered "are desolate" combines the ideas of both sin and punishment—*i.e.*, it signifies sinning, but implies its punishment. These ideas were (rightly) associated very strongly in the Hebrew mind and language. The various agencies of war, siege, famine, sword, with fire also, cut off almost the entire population when Jerusalem fell before the Chaldeans. H. C.

7-12. All festive mirth is changed into silence and sorrow. Men have been lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. And now pleasure, their idol, will be abolished. Wine and song will cease together, and those who still cling to their worldly delights will find them turn to bitterness and sorrow. Past and future tenses are intermingled, to denote the inevitableness of the coming judgment. Each city of the land, being a scene of moral confusion, will be emptied, and then demolished, and its houses left without inhabitant. A shadow broods over worldly hearts, like the shadow of the grave. *Birks.*

14, 15. Quick as thought is the transition here from sorrow to joy. The few scattered fugitives, seen as captives in foreign lands, are suddenly impressed with the majesty and glory of God, and break forth into exulting praises. They see that God is good and glorious even in His sternest discipline and in His most terrible judgments; and therefore they praise Him. The chastisements of God upon them have been a pure blessing. In verse 15 we may best suppose that the prophet in sympathy with this song interposes his exhortation to all people in the remotest ends of the earth to join in it and give glory to Jehovah, God of Israel. "Wherefore"—i.e., because of His great majesty, "all ye of the East glorify Jehovah, and all ye of the West, in the isles of the sea, glorify the name of the Lord God of Israel." H. C.—The word rendered "fires" has been variously explained as meaning valleys, caverns, doctrines, fires of affliction, exile, Urim, Ur. But the weight of exegetical authority preponderates in favor of the meaning *in the east* (as the region of sunrise or of dawning light) in opposition to the sea or west. A.

16. In this verse there is a transition back from joy to grief, equally sudden with that from grief to joy in verse 14. "From the uttermost part," the extreme wings (Heb.) "of the earth have we heard songs" of praise, "comely for the righteous." "And then I [saw the dark side again and] said Woe to me," etc. H. C.—**Righteous.** Should be taken in its general and wider sense, for the upright or faithful man. The songs of praise uttered by these in the fires of trial, or in their farthest exile, will be their beautiful ornament, the signs of a faith which glories in tribulation, pierces through clouds, and triumphs over sorrow. The prophet returns from this bright vision to lament once more the calamities near at hand. Heathen spoilers, treacherous and false, are bringing ruin and desolation on Israel

and Judah. The words may apply equally to the apostasies and rebellions of Israel, the true cause of the coming judgments. *Birks.*

17. Fear. Fear is not a base motive if it aids us in securing our welfare. It may at times be the only motive within call. A character built on fear is a base character without doubt, but a character in the formation of which fear at the right time and in the right degree has had some share may be the best of all characters. No active principle of our nature is base, which is necessary, as fear is, for our preservation. If there are objective dangers to body or soul, to the interests of time or of eternity, it is not base, it is rather wise to seek by a subjective impulse to avoid the danger. If there are dangers from sin, why should they not be feared when perceived, and be pointed out to the sinner if unperceived? If there are risks to character, how can a reasonable being fail to take them into account, or if he is not aware of them, how can a benevolent man fail to forewarn him? If God's favor is worth everything and we can forfeit or have forfeited it, what but fear can lead us in a world like this to avoid or repair the evil? If sin is eating into our life, blasting its blossoms and despoiling it of all solid fruit, and the time for amendment has not slipped by, how good a friend is that fear which can bring us to reflection, to resolution, to a new life? Why should we refuse to appeal to the motive of fear, when great interests, paramount interests are at stake, and yet appeal to it when the risk is small and the loss would be trivial? Moreover, what does experience say if not this—that few or no persons are led to break the chains of worldly habit, unless some sense of risk, some solicitude for their future welfare, lifts up its startling voice in company with the soft expostulations of the gospel. Suppose that the gospel had sounded no notes of alarm; would man in his sins, who, as it is, moves so sluggishly and tardily in the prospect of a remote evil, be ever led to move at all? Nay, might he not argue, if there were no danger threatened and no harm to be avoided, that sin must be an inconsiderable evil, since the Divine lawgiver has not thought it worth His while to call in the aid of a strong motive, to which all human forms of government find it necessary to appeal even in order to secure outward peace? *T. D. Woolsey.*

17-20. Successive judgments serve to make the desolation more and yet more complete. Whoever escapes the first falls into the second; and if any escape the second, they are taken in

the third. The "windows on high opened" suggest the deluge of Noah's time, the thought being that men can no more escape now than then. The earthquake, rending open the earth's crust and engulfing cities, is the next figure. In verse 20, the "cottage" is supposed by modern critics to be rather the hammock suspended on limbs of trees for the convenience of watching one's garden. The earth swings to and fro like such a hammock before the wind. The sins of the world lie heavy upon it; God is calling nations to their solemn account; some at least shall fall to rise no more. Probably we must assume a somewhat special reference in these verses to Babylon, yet not to the exclusion of Judah and Jerusalem. Babylon was doomed to fall so utterly as to rise no more. Precisely this is not said of Jerusalem. H. C.

23. The simple meaning of the verse appears to be that Jehovah's reign over His people shall be more august than that of any created sovereign. This is true of the Church in various periods of history, but more especially in those when the presence and power of God are peculiarly manifested. A.

In the anthem that follows, Isaiah takes his stand in that future, bright with hope, which has been announced in his earlier messages. The strain of praise and hope is continued in the two chapters that follow. *Birks.*

Our grandest Christian enterprises, in fact, still run in prophetic grooves. It is not John and Paul who are the patrons of modern missions, but rather the rapt Isaiah. It is his bugle that still, to-day, rallies and guides the march of the militant host. And as, sometimes, there are stars which refuse to be obscured, making themselves manifest even through the splendor of a noonday sun, so there are passages in this and other prophets so luminous with heavenly hope that, not alone in the gloom of Africa or the twilight of the older civilizations, but at the very focus of Christian civilization and enlightenment, they serve as beacons of inspiration and encouragement. E. C. B.

Chap. 25. In the course of this extended prophecy (chaps. 24-27) the prophet had reached the fall of Babylon at the close of chap. 24. He therefore gives us here, as he is wont, an appropriate song to be sung in praise of God for that destruction and for its results of deliverance to His people (verses 1-5); then (verses 6-9) from this minor and antecedent victory for Zion he looks down into the future to another analogous but greater victory, which

will bring home the Gentile nations to a joyful feast in Mount Zion; which will pour the light of day over the lands where darkness had reigned; wipe tears away and bring joy to the earth in the salvation of the gospel; closing (verses 10-12) with the utter duntreading of Zion's enemies, despite their puny efforts to resist the Almighty.

This chapter consists of three distinguishable parts. The first is a thanksgiving to God for the destruction of Babylon and the deliverance of the Jews (verses 1-5). The second is a promise of favor to the Gentiles and the people of God, when united on Mount Zion (verses 6-9). The third is a threatening of disgraceful ruin to Moab (verses 10-12). A.

1. In this song, the prophet speaks for the Church of God, expressing sentiments and emotions appropriate to her case. In its spirit as well as its occasion this song corresponds to that in chap. 12.

2. "*For*" (this is the proof) thou hast utterly destroyed Babylon. Thou hast changed that city, even that strongly fortified city, into a heap of ruins; palaces of strangers (foreign and alien from Israel's God) thou hast so entirely destroyed that they shall constitute a city no more; it shall never be built again. So Babylon lies to-day, unbuilt, a pile of ruins. H. C.—The stern, shapeless mound rises like a hill from the scorched plain; fragments of pottery and a stupendous mass of brick-work are occasionally laid bare by the winter rains. He is at a loss to give any form to the rude heap on which he is gazing. Those of whom they are the remains have left no visible traces of their civilization or their arts. The more he conjectures, the more vague the results appear. The scene around is worthy of the ruin. Desolation meets desolation, a feeling of awe succeeds to wonder, for there is nothing to relieve the mound, or tell of what has gone by. These huge mounds of Assyria make a deeper impression than the temples of Balbec or theatres of Ionia. *Layard.*

3. These judgments will make a deep impression on the conquerors themselves, and on the whole heathen world. A strong people, the Persian destroyers of Babylon, will glorify the God of Israel. The decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes bear witness to the fulfilment. *Birks.*

4. The nations shall reverence Jehovah, not merely as the destroyer of Babylon, but as the deliverer of His people, for whose sake that catastrophe was brought about. The two figures of extreme heat and a storm of rain are

combined to express the idea of persecution or affliction. A.

He is a "Strength to the needy in his distress," then when he needs strength and when his distress drives him to God. And as He strengthens them against their inward decays, so He shelters them from outward assaults; He is a refuge from the storm of rain or hail, and a shadow from the scorching heat of the sun in summer. Whatever dangers or troubles God's people may be in, effectual care is taken that they shall sustain no real hurt or damage. When perils are most threatening and alarming, God will then appear for the safety of His people; and God will be such a shelter to His people that they shall be able to stand the shock, keep their ground, and maintain their integrity and peace. A storm, beating on a ship, tosses it, but that which beats on a wall never stirs it. H.

6. The song of praise now passes on to the days of Messiah. The blessings of the gospel are described under the figure of an ample feast, as Isa. 55:1-6; Matt. 22:1-4; Luke 14:15-20. The Author of this feast is first named, the Lord of hosts. Next, its subjects, or the invited guests, who are "all nations." Thirdly, the place of the entertainment, "in this mountain;" or Jerusalem, where the Son of God began and closed His public ministry, and suffered without the gate. Lastly, the nature of the banquet, the meat of fatlings and choicest wine, free from dregs, but with the strength and richness of long fermentation. This feast is expounded in the gospel, and is the full provision of mercy in the atoning sacrifice and resurrection of the Son of God. *Birks.*

—By the inspired penmen Zion was exalted from its original geographical sense to be the representative of that Divine state of which it was the centre, and of which the Christian Church is the true heir. It is historically true that from Jerusalem the gospel of Christ went forth to bless all nations, and in this sense the feast was spread for them on Mount Zion. But with a far deeper, grander import the expression, "in this mountain," teaches us that the feast which God makes for the world is made in the Church, and is furnished to the nations through her instrumentality. *E. P. Barrows.*

6, 7. The deliverance wrought for God's people in their restoration from Babylon suggested the yet greater deliverance wrought from the Gentile nations in bringing them from darkness to light, from their state of utter want and famine to the fulness and fatness of this rich gospel feast. "This mountain" can

be no other than Mount Zion, thought of as a symbol of the gospel Church. The Lord prepares this feast in a very special sense indeed, since Jesus gives His own flesh as the bread of life. With figures of speech, luxuriant, full and rich, the prophet sets forth the fatness and abundance of this feast: "fat things;" wines long kept standing on their lees; fat things full of marrow; wines not only kept long on their lees, but well refined. The Hebrews had no higher ideas of a perfect feast than those which are grouped together here. To heighten the wealth of this prediction, the Lord prepares this feast for *all people*. So the next verse has it; God removes the veil that has long covered "*all people*" and has been spread over "all nations." This therefore is the world's great jubilee. Correspondingly the same great fact is revealed in Ps. 22. The world's great sufferer, having borne our griefs and passed through the dreadful agony, makes His thanksgiving feast; His friends partake with Him; "the meek eat and are satisfied;" "all the ends of the world remember and return unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations worship before Him." The essential ideas are that Jesus, having suffered, provides a most magnificent gospel feast; gathers all nations home around His table and to His heart of infinite love; sees the travail of His soul and is satisfied, rejoicing forever in the fruits unto life and salvation which come of His vicarious death. H. C.

8. The true sense seems to be that all misery and suffering, comprehended under the generic name of *death*, should be completely done away. It is then a description of the ultimate effects of the influence before described as flowing from Mount Zion or the Church of God. In its highest sense this may never be realized by any individual till after death. Paul says accordingly (1 Cor. 15:54), that when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, *Death is swallowed up in victory*. A. —To *swallow up death forever* is to abolish it forever; to *wipe away tears from all faces* is to remove all sorrows; to *take away the reproach of His people* is to make them honorable throughout all the earth. These words are applied in the New Testament to the final glory and blessedness of the saints in heaven (1 Cor. 15). *Barrows.*

The troubles and labors of the present world, and the dissolution of the body, do still take place as warnings and chastisements for sin.

ners ; but the sorrows are not comfortless, nor the dissolution final ; the dominion of death consisted in this, that it rendered that dissolution final and irreparable ; and the devil is said to have the power of death, because, by seducing man to sin, he subjected him to that irretrievable dissolution. That death should be destroyed and men restored to happiness by the Messiah is confessed by very eminent Jewish writers, who therefore apply to him, in the most rigorous sense, these words of Isaiah. *Dean Stanhope.*

Christ will Himself, in His resurrection, triumph over death ; will break its bands, its bars, asunder, and cast away all its cords. The grave seemed to swallow Him up, but really He swallowed it up. The happiness of the saints shall be out of the reach of death, which puts a period to all the enjoyments of this world, embitters them, and stains the beauty of them. Believers may triumph over death, and look upon it as a conquered enemy—"O death, where is thy sting?" When the dead bodies of the saints shall be raised at the great day, and their mortality swallowed up of life, then death will be forever swallowed up of victory ; and it is the last enemy. Grief shall be banished, and there shall be perfect and endless joy ; "the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." Those that mourn for sin shall be comforted, and have their consciences pacified. In the covenant of grace there shall be that provided which is sufficient to balance all the sorrows of this present time, to wipe away our tears, and to refresh us. Those particularly that suffer for Christ shall have consolations abounding as their afflictions do abound. But in the joys of heaven, and nowhere short of them, will fully be "brought to pass this saying," as that before, for there it is that God shall "wipe away all tears" (Rev. 7 : 17 ; 21 : 4). And therefore "there shall be no more sorrow," because "there shall be no more death." The hope of this should now wipe away all excessive tears, all the weeping that hinders sowing. H.

Hear ye how our Lord Jesus Christ, through the victory which He accomplished in Himself, hath overcome sin, death and the devil. The devil He destroyed in His own body, death He drowned in His own blood, and sin He extinguished in His sufferings. This He accomplished alone and in Himself. But He hath not kept it for Himself alone ; for He, as very and eternal God and Lord over all, needed not this victory for Himself, still less did He need to become man, and still less again to suffer under Pontius Pilate. That, however, so great and

high a person hath done this concerneth me, and thee, and all of us. It is the power and fruit of the sufferings and resurrection of Christ. Therefore, if there were a thousand hells and a hundred thousand deaths, they would be but a spark or a mere drop in comparison with Christ's resurrection, victory and triumph, which He bestoweth on all who believe in Him. My sin and death are the spark ; but the death and resurrection of my Lord Christ are the great sea. For Christ, risen from all suffering, is greater than our sin and death, yea, greater than heaven and earth. *Luther.*

To those to whom the resurrection of Christ is a fact their own future life is a fact. Here we have a solid certainty, and here alone. The heart says as we lay our dear ones in the grave, "Surely we part not forever." The conscience says, as it points us to our own evil deeds, "After death the judgment." A deep, indestructible instinct prophesies in every breast of a future. But all is vague and doubtful. The one proof of a life beyond the grave is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore let us be glad with the gladness of men plucked from a dark abyss of doubt and uncertainty, and planted on the rock of solid certainty ; and let us rejoice with joy unspeakable, and laden with a prophetic weight of glory, as we ring out the ancient Easter morning's greeting, "The Lord is risen indeed !" A. M.

When Christ our God had been offered up as a sacrifice, and the Resurrection followed, our benignant Master took away the names "death and hades," and introduced into our life a new and strange mode of behavior. Do you see how, thenceforward, death is called "repose and sleep," and he whose face, before this, was terrible, now, since the Resurrection, has become a thing easy to despise? Do you see how splendid is the trophy of the Resurrection? To-day we are keeping our feast of victory in its splendor ; to-day our Master, having set up His trophy against death, and overthrown the tyranny of the devil, has granted us the enjoyment of that path to salvation which lies through the Resurrection. Let us all then rejoice, let us leap and exult for joy. For if it was our Master that won the victory, and set up the trophy, yet we share in common with Him the joy and gladness. For it was for our salvation that He did all. *Chrysostom.*

Death is merely a change of place or state, an accident affecting locality, and little more. We have had plenty of changes before. Life has been one long series of departures. This is different from the others mainly in that it is

the last, and that to go away from this visible and fleeting show, where we wander aliens among things which have no true kindred with us, is to go home, where there will be no more pulling up the tent-pegs, and toiling cross the deserts in monotonous change. How strong is the conviction, spoken in that name for death, that the essential life lasts on quite unaltered through it all! How slight the else formidable thing is made! We may change climates, and for the stormy bleakness of life may have the long still days of heaven, but we do not change ourselves. We lose nothing worth keeping when we leave behind the body as a dress not fitted for home, where we are going. We but travel one more stage, though it be the last, and part of it be in pitchy darkness. Some pass over it as in a fiery chariot, like Paul and many a martyr. Some have to toil through it with slow steps and bleeding feet and fainting heart; but all may have a brother with them, and holding His hand may find that the journey is not so hard as they feared, and the home from which they shall remove no more, better than they hoped when they hoped the most. A. M.

Faith is that looking forward to a future with something like certainty that raises man above the narrow feelings of the present. And therefore it is that faith, and nothing but faith, gives victory in death. It is that elevation of character which we get from looking steadily and forever forward, till eternity becomes a real home to us, that enables us to look down upon the last struggle, and the funeral, and the grave, not as the great end of all, but only as something that stands between us and the end. We are conquerors of death when we are able to look beyond it. Every day His servants are dying modestly and peacefully—not a word of victory on their lips; but Christ's deep triumph in their hearts—watching the slow progress of their own decay, and yet so far emancipated from personal anxiety that they are still able to think and to plan for others, not knowing that they are doing any great thing. They die, and the world hears nothing of them; and yet theirs was the completest victory. They came to the battle-field, the field to which they had been looking forward all their lives, and the enemy was not to be found. There was no foe to fight with. F. W. Robertson.

Paul does not speak of the fulness of the reward as being ready for him at death, but as being "henceforth laid up for him in heaven." So he looks forward beyond the grave. The immediate future after death was to his view

a period of blessedness indeed, but not yet full. The state of the dead in Christ was a state of consciousness, a state of rest, a state of felicity, but also a state of expectation. To the full height of their present capacity they who sleep in Jesus are blessed, being still in His embrace and their spirits pillowed on His heart, not so sleeping that, like drowsy infants, they know not where they lie so safe, but only sleeping in so much as they rest from weariness, and have closed their eyes to the ceaseless turmoil of this fleeting world, and are lapped about forever with the sweet, unbroken consciousness that they are "present with the Lord." What perfect repose, perfect fruition of all desires, perfect union with the perfect end and object of all their being, perfect exemption from all sorrow, tumult and sin can bring of blessedness, that they possess in over measure unfailingly. And, in addition, they still know the joy of hope, and have carried that jewel with them into another world, for they wait for "the redemption of the body," in the reception of which, "at that day," their life will be filled up to a yet fuller measure, and gleam with a more lustrous "glory." Now they rest and wait. Then shall they be crowned. A. M.

With the advent of the heavenly city, God Himself steps down into new and dearer intimacy with His children. He is no longer their inaccessible "Sky-Father;" henceforth He tents *in the midst* of His children. "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is *with* men, and He will dwell *with* them, and He will be 'God-with-them,' their God." It is in the heavenly city that the old Immanuel promise comes first to its perfect fulfilling; "and He shall be 'God-with-them.'" In the beautiful homes that shall throng the glorious city, no twilight hours of sad foreboding, or of lonely remembering, shall intrude upon the glad music of the satisfied and restful spirit; for there shall be no more sorrow nor crying, for God Himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And over its streets of gold, and out through its gates of pearl, no gathering of bereaved ones shall file in still procession, and group around an open grave in service of deep interment and long farewell, for "the grave has been cast into the lake of fire," "and there shall be no more death." A city in whose homes there is no pang, and without whose gates there is no God's-acre! C. H. P.

It would be a great step made in the direction of habitual holiness and caution of living,

if we could come to keep the invisible world and its hosts of departed and waiting souls present to our minds as living realities ; if we could realize, as a constant thought, the true, present life of all who have been upon the earth, and are no more seen. We should read history with a different and more serious mind ; and we should draw directer lessons from it, to our own daily caution and watchfulness of living. We should not feel the dead, who pass away from our sight, lost to our love, but learn to look on them with something of the same tenderness and *appropriation* (if I may so express it) of feeling with which we regard friends who are gone from us into distant countries, and whom we cannot hope to see again in the flesh. We should come to feel that as our store grows in paradise, by friends who pass, year after year, from the visible to the invisible, our hearts pass thither too in the same degree, and dwell more among the unseen realities than the seen vanities of things. For among the invisible even now is our real life ; among them is to be our eternal duration. *Bp. Moberly.*

9. *And they shall say in that day, Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for Him, and He will save us ; this is Jehovah ; we have waited for Him ; let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.* When these gracious promises shall be fulfilled, those who have trusted in them shall no longer be ashamed of their strong confidence, because it will be justified by the event, and they will have nothing left but to rejoice in the fulfilment of their hopes. *A.*

Here we have the great ceaseless song of Christendom rejoicing beneath the throne of Christ, congratulating Him on His triumphs, on His glorious presence and power, looking back to the ages which preceded His advent and forward to the completeness of His salvation yet to be revealed. *Liddon.*—We believe that the history of the world is the unfolding of His will, and the course of opinion guided in its channel by the Voice which the depths have obeyed from of old. Therefore we wait for His working, expecting no miracle, prescribing no time, hurried by no impatience, avoiding no task of defence or confession ; but knowing that, unhasting and unresting, He will arise when the storm is loudest, and somehow will say, "Peace ! be still." Then they who had not cast away their confidence for any fashion of unbelief that passeth away will rejoice as they sing, "Lo ! this is our God ; we have waited for Him, and He will save us." *A. M.*

Jesus is the way of God to man, the way of man to God. In Jesus man finds God the Father ; in Jesus God finds the lost sheep. Man finds in Jesus God, to have God as his portion ; God finds in Jesus man, to be His portion forevermore. Blessed be God, He has brought us nigh to Himself. We adore the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. We rejoice with the joy of broken and healed, of contrite and comforted hearts, because Jesus loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and brought us near to God, into the holy of holies—a royal priesthood. We give thanks for the gift of the Holy Ghost, in whom we now worship the Father, and by whom the light and life has been kindled within our hearts. Herein is love, that, notwithstanding our sin, God has brought us nigh unto Himself. More wonderful and glorious than angelic purity or the innocence of Paradise is the Divine righteousness in which we now stand before God ; and high above all hopes and thoughts of the human heart are our union with the Incarnate Son of God, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in our souls. *A. Saphir.*

If a man but offers himself up trustfully and clear of all hindrance to the love of God in Jesus Christ, saying, though it be in silence, "be it upon me ; let it come and do its sweet will in me ; this I will trustfully take and tenderly rest in, for it is all the salvation I want"—plainly that is but letting God love him, and yet what is it but faith? Indeed, there is no so good way of describing faith, as to make it convertible at every point into the mere suffering trustfully of God's love upon us. Yes, O guilty one, let God love thee ; yes, believe the love God hath to thee, and rest thy all eternally in it. *Bushnell.*

10. "In this mountain," here, as in verses 6, 7, locates these manifestations of God's presence and power in His Church, the central throne of His gospel kingdom. Here the Lord's *hand* (His emblem of power) will abide ("rest") and here it will reveal itself gloriously over His enemies. Moab, as also Edom, is used comprehensively for the enemies of Israel. Historically both were long the jealous rivals of the Lord's people, often in relations of bitter hostility. Here Moab is seen in vision trodden down as straw is trodden down by the cattle in the waters of the dunghill. *H. C.*

11. Having compared the fall of Moab to the treading down of straw in a filthy pool, the prophet carries out his figure here, but with a change so slight and at the same time so natural as almost to escape observation, while it

greatly adds to the life of the description. The downtrodden straw now becomes a living person, struggling in vain to save himself in the pool. A.

12. The Hebrew words give a strong sense of lofty and inaccessible towers, thus: "The inaccessibility of the height of thy walls He brings down, lays low, and causes to touch the earth, even the dust." Such terms, so accumulated, carry our thought to the lofty walls of Babylon, as if he would say, Though Moab were to build her walls high as Babylon did hers, yet God would bring them utterly down to the dust. If we consider Moab as a representative name, standing for the embittered enemies of Zion, the prophet's thought

may naturally have been on Babylon as well. H. C.

6-12. This wonderful passage, for depth, grandeur and comprehensiveness of meaning, is not surpassed by anything in the Old Testament that pertains to the glory of the last days. It follows a prediction of the judgments of God upon the oppressors of His people, and it naturally returns, toward the close of the chapter, to the same theme, since the way for the enlargement of Zion is prepared by the overthrow of her enemies. Then follows, in the next chapter, the song of Zion in view of God's mighty interpositions in her behalf. E. P. Barrows.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXVI.

- 26:1 IN that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; 2 salvation will he appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous 3 nation which keepeth truth may enter in. Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose* mind 4 *is* stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the 5 LORD JEHOVAH is an everlasting rock. For he hath brought down them that dwell on high, 6 the lofty city: he layeth it low, he layeth it low even to the ground; he bringeth it even to 7 the dust. The foot shall tread it down; even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the 8 needy. The way of the just is uprightness: thou that art upright dost direct the path of the 9 just. Yea, in the way of thy judgements, O LORD, have we waited for thee; to thy name 10 and to thy memorial is the desire of our soul. With my soul have I desired thee in the 11 night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgements are 12 in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. Let favour be shewed to the 13 wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal wrong- 14 fully, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.
- 15 LORD, thy hand is lifted up, yet they see not: but they shall see *thy* zeal for the people, 16 and be ashamed; yea, fire shall devour thine adversaries. LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for 17 us: for thou hast also wrought all our works for us. O LORD our God, other lords beside 18 thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. *They* 19 *are* dead, they shall not live; *they* *are* deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou 20 visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish. Thou hast increased the nation, O LORD, thou hast increased the nation; thou art glorified: thou hast enlarged all the borders of the land.
- 16 LORD, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer *when* thy chastening 17 was upon them. Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is 18 in pain and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been before thee, O LORD. We have been 19 with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not 20 wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen. Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is *as* the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead.
- 20 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself

21 for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity : the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

Chap. 26. The first words of this chapter show its connection with the two chapters that precede it, and also what its subject is—viz., an appropriate song of praise on occasion of the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon. The last two verses (20, 21) suggest beautifully and tenderly that the day of suffering and peril is not altogether past, yet will not be long protracted. H. C.

The song opens with an acknowledgment of God's protection and an exhortation to confide therein (verses 1-4). This is founded on the exhibition of His righteousness and power in the destruction of His foes and the oppressors of His people (verses 5-11). The Church abjures the service of all other sovereigns, and vows perpetual devotion to Him by whom it has been delivered and restored (verses 12-15). Her utter incapacity to save herself is then contrasted with God's power to restore His people to new life, with a joyful anticipation of which the song concludes (verses 16-19). The additional sentences contain a beautiful and tender intimation of the trials which must be endured before these glorious events take place, with a solemn assurance that Jehovah is about to visit both His people and their enemies with chastisement (verses 20, 21). A.

1, 2. No more vivid picture of peace and security could be presented to the war-harassed Israelite than the triumphant song with which the chapter begins, portraying the time when God's salvation shall take the place of walls and bulwarks ; when the gates shall stand open ; when men shall go in and out without question ; when there shall be no alarm by night or by day, but, trusting in Jehovah's guard alone, all shall be kept in perfect peace. It was a dream never heretofore realized in the history of the Israelitish nation, save during the short reign of Solomon, the transient type of the Messianic kingdom of peace. To-day, in its desolation, that land, as we wander over its hills and valleys, tells the story of its past history. Every hill-top or "tell," as it is called, is crowned with a grass-grown desolate heap, from which ragged stones protrude, or are scattered over its surface. What are these? If we dig into them, we find that they are all the ruins of walls which once encompassed the old cities of Israel and Judah, now laid low even to the ground—brought even to the dust, and trodden down by the foot of the poor and

needy. No less than 2770 names of ancient sites have been recovered and laid down in the maps of the Palestine Exploration Fund, the greater part of them being those of ancient walled towns now laid low. *Tristram.*

3. The original expresses it still more forcibly in its Semitic simplicity, "Thou shalt keep him in peace, peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee." It is not a promise of freedom from sorrow ; it is not a promise of success or prosperity on earth ; but it is a promise of that inward peace, of that heart's-ease in the breast, with which sorrow itself is a tolerable burden, and without which prosperity itself is a questionable boon. If we be God's true children, then we are in possession of this peace. *Far-rar.*—Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace, in perfect peace, inward peace, outward peace, peace with God, peace of conscience, peace at all times, under all events ; this peace shall he be put into and kept in the possession of whose mind is stayed upon God, because it trusts in Him. It is the character of every good man, that he trust in God ; puts himself under His guidance and government, and depends upon Him that it shall be greatly to his advantage to do so. They that trust in God must have their minds stayed upon Him, must trust Him at all times, under all events, must firmly and faithfully adhere to Him, with an entire satisfaction in Him. Such as do so God will keep in perpetual peace, and that peace shall keep them. When evil tidings are abroad, they shall calmly expect the event, and not be disturbed by frightful apprehensions arising from them, whose hearts are "fixed, trusting in the Lord." H.

Confidence is the noblest exercise of faith. Looking steadily upon God in Himself, and in Christ through the promises, it raises the soul above all fears and discouragements, above all doubts and disquietments, either about the removing of evil or the obtaining of good. Hence confidence is called the rest of the soul ; therefore such as attain to confidence are said to be in peace, in *perfect peace*. *Caryl.*—Peace does not dwell in outward things, but within the soul. We may preserve it in the midst of the bitterest pain, if our will remain firm and submissive. Peace in this life springs from acquiescence even in disagreeable things, not in an exemption from suffering. *Fenelon.*

Peace is that state in which there are no de-

sires madly demanding an impossible gratification ; that state in which there is no misery, no remorse, no sting. And there are but three things which can break that peace. The first is discord between the mind of man and the lot which he is called on to inherit ; the second is discord between the affections and powers of the soul ; and the third is doubt of the rectitude and justice and love, wherewith this world is ordered. The deepest want of man is not a desire for happiness, but a craving for peace ; not a wish for the gratification of every desire, but a craving for the repose of acquiescence in the will of God. F. D. H.

It is a great part of the happiness of our lives to have a confidence or quietness of spirit about the things of this life ; nor is anything more uncomely for or uncomfortable to a saint than distrustful thoughts and fears. To carry a troubled mind and a troubling frame of spirit about us, lest some evil should befall us, is more grievous than the present suffering of evil. Distrust is one of the worst diseases or sicknesses of the mind, and to be anxious about our earthly enjoyments is as bad as to trust upon them. As our hopes should be above the creature, so likewise should our fears be. *Caryl*.—Peace comes just in proportion to trust. The first lesson to learn is God—to know Him, to believe in Him, to have a child-like trust that He will do the very best for all His creatures by the very necessity of His own goodness. He is under the compulsion of His own benevolence. This trust enables us to look through dark hours and to look over trials and griefs. It enables us in the whole daily life to walk with confidence, because things must come out for the best to the loving soul. We know in prayer that what we desire is God's desire ; that we can state our wishes as to one who will of course grant all that is best. The soul must learn the way of peace, as it must reach all things, by experience. It is no wonder that peace at first is by broken glimpses, and by snatches ; and that prayer goes out often into a dark void. It will take long patience and careful study and gentle teachableness to bring us to the calm, cloudless condition. Whatever else each one may hope for in the heavenly state, this is our common longing and our sure possession. The end of all our strivings and strugglings is peace. *E. P. Powell*.

God Himself communicates that peace of mind which flows from a sense of pardon and acceptance. He reveals to the soul in His own way and time, by His own spirit, the love He

bears toward it, the mercy He has prepared for it, perhaps the work He has wrought in it. He shows it in the blood of Christ, its freedom from condemnation ; in the obedience of Christ, its " robe of righteousness ;" in the purifying spirit, the gifts and graces of Christ, its " garment of salvation ;" and in the promises and life of Christ, its safety. He unfolds, as it were, the book of life ; He shows to the wondering sinner his own poor, despised name shining there ; and the consequence is—and how can it be otherwise ?—he is " filled with all joy and peace in believing ;" he " abounds in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost ;" " the peace of God rules," presides and reigns " in his heart." *C. Bradley*.

4. Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.

We may depend upon Him, for His arm is never dried up, nor does His strength fail. *There is no wrinkle upon the brow of Eternity*. God is where He was at first ; He continues forever a God of infinite power, able to save those that trust in Him. *Manton*.—" For in the Lord Jehovah is a rock of ages." So the Hebrew has it, including under the figure of a rock the two ideas of a refuge and of a sure foundation. The original makes this special name of God emphatic by repetition, " For in Jah Jehovah"—Jah being a contraction for Jehovah. It should be borne in mind that while all the names of God are significant, each of some one attribute, the special significance of this name is, *God as faithful to His promises*, ever true to those who trust Him. Immutability is perhaps the primary idea, He who changes never ; but the practical and ultimate result is, one who, being changeless, never forgets His promises—experiences no change in the state of mind which gave the promises ; one who continues evermore the same, and therefore is ever true and faithful. This is His memorial name, a name to be remembered through all the interval, however long, between promise and fulfilment, till you see the promise verified. (See Hos. 12:5 and Ex. 3:13-15.) *H. C.*—The double name Jah Jehovah is most emphatic, to denote God's unchangeableness in His love to His people. " Everlasting Strength" is literally " a rock of ages." In Him a sure and eternal support, firm as a rock, lasting as eternity, will be found by His people. *Birks*.—Therefore the song breaks into triumphant fervor of summons to all who hear it (verse 4) to " trust in Jah Jehovah forever." Such settled, perpetual trust is the only attitude corresponding to

His mighty name, and to the realities found in His character. He is the "rock of ages," the grand figure which Moses learned beneath the cliffs of Sinai and wove into his last song, and which tells us of the unchanging strength that makes a sure hiding-place for all generations, and the ample space which will hold all the souls of men, and be for a shadow from the heat, a covert from the tempest, a shelter from the foe, and a home for the homeless, with many a springing fountain in its clefts. A. M.

Trust. If you would understand the doctrine of faith and its relations to the cross, you must study it in both Testaments. You must follow its growth through the twilight of earliest ages, when types and ceremonies were the trellis that sustained it, forward to the time when it wreathed itself round the cross. You will first see it in the lives of men who through darkness stretched their hands unto God, and to whom the whole of salvation was in one word, *trust*. As revelation progresses you will see its vital character passing into such words as *come, receive, look and rest*. The idea grows with the growth of the Bible. Side lights of Christian lives, of history and prophecy, play upon it all the way along, until, where the apostle exclaims, "now abideth faith, hope and charity," it stands out with its two companions like three graces divinely clear and fair. And so with any religious subject. The Bible development of it makes the most beautiful study of it. C. L. Thompson.

If you look into the Old Testament, you will find constantly, "Trust ye in the Lord forever;" "Put thy trust in Jehovah!" There, too, faith was the seed and germ of all religion. There, too, though under the hard husk of apparently external obedience and ceremonial sacrifices, the just lived by faith. The object was the Jehovah of that ancient covenant. Religion has always been the same in every dispensation. At every time, that which made a man a devout man has been identically the same thing. It has always been true that it has been faith which has bound man to God, and given man hope. But when we come to the New Testament, the centre is shifted, as it would seem. What has become of the grand old words, "Trust ye in the Lord Jehovah"? Look! Christ stands there, and says, "Believe upon Me!" With calm, simple, profound dignity, He lays His hand upon all the ancient and consecrated words, upon all the ancient and hallowed emotions that used to set to the unseen God between the cherubim, throned above judgment and resting upon mercy; and He

says, They are Mine—give them to Me! That ancient trust, I claim the right to have it. That old obedience, it belongs to Me. I am He to whom in all time the loving hearts of them that loved God have set. I am the Angel of the Covenant, in whom whoever trusteth shall never be confounded! Christ thus steps, in the New Testament—in so far as the direction of the religious emotions of faith and love is concerned—into the place filled by the Jehovah of the Old. Christ was our brother and a man, but He was the Son of God, the Divine Redeemer. The object of faith is Christ; and as object of faith He must needs be Divine. A. M.

From beginning to end a Christian life is a life of faith. The word "trust" is the keyword of Old Testament theology, and the word "believe" is the keyword in the New. They both mean the same thing. *Cuyler*.—We are apt to lose ourselves in the labyrinths of theology, until we learn that Christian faith is essentially personal trust in Christ and the Father. This trust may be sublime even if it cannot solve the Divine mysteries; it can be perfect peace without knowing exactly *how* God's mercy performs its wonders. What more does love need than the apprehension of God as love? *Stuckenberg*.—Faith and obedience turn a man into the likeness of that in which he trusts. If we trust Jesus we open our hearts to Him; and if we open our hearts to Him He will come in. Faith and obedience will mould us, by their natural effect, into the resemblance of that on which we lean. As one of the old German mystics said, "What thou lovest, that thou dost become." And it is blessedly true. A. M.

The apostle says, "By faith ye stand." He does not say, by patience, or by hope, or the like. They are drawn from faith. Strengthen that, and strengthen all other that are infused from it. As a tree, we cast not water on the branches, but on the root. So strengthen faith. We strengthen love, and hope, and all, if we strengthen faith and assurance of God's love in Christ. *Sabbes*.—As we put trust in Him and receive the blessing and find Him to be faithful, we come to believe in Him; not merely because of His Word, but because of what we have experienced. Out of all these comes patience under trial, and "patience worketh experience, and experience hope which maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." Out of a fixed confidence groweth contentment, and we find godliness with contentment to be great gain. Kindred graces

come to adorn the character, even "the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit, which in Christ's sight is of great price." Out of the whole arises fruit ever becoming richer and mellow—*in good works, in almsgiving, in self-sacrifice, in abundant labors for the good of mankind.* These react on faith, and by works faith is made perfect. Thus the Christian, by addition, grows up into the measure of the stature of Christ. *McCosh.*

In prayer, it is faith that must make us successful; in obedience, it is faith that must make us cheerful; in afflictions, it is faith that must make us patient; in trials, it is faith that must make us resolute; in desertions, it is faith that must make us comfortable; in life, it is faith which must make us fruitful; and in death, it is faith which must make us victorious. *Clarke.*—Its nature and office is most simple, as much so as the confidence of a prattling child in his father's kindness and wisdom; yet at the same time as expansive in its views as the loftiest science that ever tasked the powers of a created intellect. It is but a hearty assent to the whole testimony of God—a submission of the entire soul, not of the intellect only, but also of the affections and the imagination, to the testimony of God; whether that testimony be employed in prescribing a duty or in establishing a privilege. It is the acknowledgment of human ignorance, united with confidence in Divine wisdom and subjection to Divine authority. Making no reservations, prescribing no terms of limitation, claiming no power of revoking or abridging its grant, it is a surrender of the intelligent spirit to the word of God as its rule and its stay; in conformity to it as the one standard of human conduct, and in dependence upon it as the only fitting nutriment of the spiritual life. *W. R. W.*

While it is a great thing to be an earnest worker in Christ's service, yet the Christian life is not mainly a life of action, but of trust; not of independent exertion, but of self-abandonment to the working of a mightier agency than ours. Even at its outset it is not work, but faith. The beginning of true religion is not the setting out on a new course in the consciousness of unexhausted strength and resolution, but rather the casting of the spirit worn with the burden, soiled with the dust of life's friendless journey, on One who has offered, and is infinitely able to sustain it. And so in its subsequent progress, while there is an aspect in which religion may be contemplated as a life of strenuous work, there is another and higher

in which it must be viewed as a life of resignation and of rest. Calmly as the midnight voyager sleeps, while under watchful guidance the vessel bears him onward, so calmly, with such trustful humility, does the believer commit himself and his fates for time and eternity to the unsleeping providence of God. Staying his hand, indeed, from no duty, withholding from no work of self-improvement or of beneficent activity, yielding never to that spurious humility which is but the disguise of indolent fatalism, he yet ever retains in his spirit the unanxious quietness of one who knows that results are not in his hand, but God's. It is little, at best, that he can do to help on the world's progress or his own; but whether he work, or forbear from working, he knows that "the Father worketh hitherto, and will work." In the strife with sin, in the contemplation of moral evil withstanding God's work in the world, there may be much to discourage an earnest mind; but ever when doubts harass, or abortive efforts distress the spirit, and the sense of our human weakness becomes most oppressive, what relief to pass out of self into God, and to stay our feebleness on the everlasting arms. *Caird.*

7. *The way for the righteous is level; Thou most upright wilt level the path of the righteous.* A man's way is a common scriptural figure for his course of life. A straight or level way is a prosperous life. It is here declared that the course of the righteous is a prosperous one, because God makes it so.

8. *Also in the way of Thy judgments, oh Jehovah, we have waited for Thee; to Thy name and Thy remembrance (was our) soul's desire.* For this manifestation of Thy righteousness and goodness we have long been waiting *in the way of Thy judgments*—i.e., to see Thee come forth as a judge, for the vindication of Thy people and the destruction of their enemies. *Name* and *remembrance* or *memorial* denote the manifestation of God's attributes in His works. *A.*

8, 9. By often thinking of God, the heart will be enticed into desires after Him. "The desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee;" and see what follows, verse 9: "With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early." Love sets the soul on musing, and from musing to praying. Meditation is prayer in bullion, prayer in the ore—soon melted and run into holy desires. The laden cloud soon drops into rain; the piece charged soon goes off when fire is put to it. *A.*

meditating soul is in *proxima potentia* to prayer.
William Gurnall.

9. In the night. Only in the sacredness of inward silence does the soul truly meet the secret, hiding God. The strength of resolve, which afterward shapes life and mixes itself with action, is the fruit of these sacred solitary moments. There is a Divine depth in silence; we meet God alone! *F. W. Robertson.*

Have I desired Thee, . . . will I seek Thee. A devotional spirit cultivates the habit of seeing God in everything. To such a spirit the earth and the heavens are a temple, the only temple worthy of God. To it the succession of day and night and the march of the seasons are constant hymns. To it, not the heavens alone, but the whole framework and structure of nature with its ongoings "declare the glory of God." This is the spirit which it is the duty and happiness of man to cultivate. The highest use of nature is not the support of man, but to lead him to God. A devotional spirit may also be cultivated by observing the providence of God as it respects nations, individuals and particularly ourselves. Here, as in nature, it is possible for men to substitute something else, as chance, or fate, for God; but those who believe in Him will nowhere find more striking evidence of a Divine hand, and "he who will observe the providence of God will have providences to observe." But the main nutriment of a devotional spirit must be found in the Scriptures. Whatever may be said of the truth of the Scriptures, it is demonstrable that the God whom they reveal must call forth the highest possible adoration, and hence that the knowledge of God as revealed in them must, more than anything else can, quicken intelligent devotion. The attributes and character of God as made known in the Scriptures hold the same relation to devotion that the infinity of space, and the awful force that sustains and moves in it the array of suns and planets, holds to the emotion of sublimity; and as nothing can supersede infinite space in that relation, so nothing can supersede the God of the Bible as the ground and stimulus of the highest possible devotion. Thus recognizing God in the three great modes in which He is revealed—in nature, in providence and in revelation—we shall cultivate a devotional spirit.
Mark Hopkins.

When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. God does not punish for the sake of punishment merely; even His severities are the effects of goodness, and

always directed to the advantage of those who feel them, or at least of others, "that they may hear, and fear, and do no more wickedness." The great comprehensive lesson which He intends to teach by every judgment is, an awful regard to Himself as the moral governor of the world and the practice of religion.
Abp. Secker.

The only power which is absolutely necessary to the world's good is that of righteousness. This unites a people. This gives clear heads, strong frames, valiant hearts. A nation whose heart is soundly righteous will not fight unless it must; but if it must, it will fight grandly and for a righteous aim. The great God of nations will set His seal of approval on peoples that cleave to the right by giving again and again the victory to that which, humanly speaking, is the weaker side. Scripture cases of this abound: Israel and Pharaoh; Gideon and the Midianites; Hezekiah and Sennacherib; Jehoshaphat and the Ammonites; and (in another sense) Elijah and the priests and prophets of Baal. The Word of God is continually showing us that power is not always where it seems to be, but very often where it seems not to be: Joseph, Daniel, Peter, etc. From all these considerations, there may be drawn out an earnest appeal to men, even if they aim at nought higher than to be the true lovers and guardians of their country and nation, to seek for the sake of their own dear land, to love and to practise righteousness. C. C.

12-19. The prophet, in these verses, looks back upon what God had done with them, both in mercy and judgment, and sings unto God of both; and then looks forward upon what he hoped God would do for them. H.

12. *Jehovah, Thou wilt give us peace, for even all our works Thou hast wrought for us.* This is an expression of strong confidence and hope, founded on what has already been experienced. God certainly would favor them in future, for He had done so already. A.

13. The grand corruption of the heart of man, the great root-sin which sets itself against Christ as a Lord, is that lord of all misrule, SELF; that is the lord that lords it over you; and all other sins are but under-servants to this great lord of self-love, self-pride and self-righteousness. Now a true believer is righteous by the righteousness of another; he lives by the life of another; he is acted on by the spirit of another; and, therefore, he, of any man in the world, should have least of self in him; because Christ, as Lord, doth absolutely set Himself against this great corruption. And therefore,

if you would know one excellent way of judging of Jesus Christ the Lord, His being in you, it is by the breaking and casting down of self ; for the more full that a man is of self, the more empty is he of Christ ; and the more full he is of Christ, the more empty he is of self ; for the lord-self, and the Lord-Christ, cannot stand together ; the lordship of Christ and the lordship of self are inconsistent ; when you receive the Lord-Christ, then the lord-self is unthroned and thrown down. *Erskine.*

14. Those whom we lately served are now no more ; Thou hast destroyed them and consigned them to oblivion, for the very purpose of securing our freedom and devotion to Thy service. *A.*

15. The prophet repeats the cherished thought : Thou hast increased Thine own people, and in doing this hast *glorified Thyself*. "Thou hast enlarged all the borders of the land," is the proper rendering. The sense is that God had moved back the borders of their land on every side to enlarge their territory. The new Zion is to be on a larger scale, filling far more territory. This enlargement (as is shown fully in many other prophecies) contemplates the addition not only of restored Jews, but of converted Gentiles. *H. C.*

16, 17. The song passes now from the past to the future. Israel's national rejection of idols, their increase in number, and their wide dispersion are followed by sore troubles, that prepare the way, in the last times, for their full and final recovery to the covenant and favor of God. Their own efforts will wholly fail. God Himself will then mightily interfere ; and Zion, according to the later promise (66 : 7-9), will travail not in vain, and will bring forth children. *Birks.*

16. It was not merely after their deliverance that they turned from idols unto God. Their deliverance itself was owing to their humble prayers. *Visit* is here used in the unusual but natural sense of seeking God in supplication. It is implied, though not expressed, that their prayer was humble and submissive *because* they felt that what they suffered was a chastisement from God.

19. *Thy dead shall live, my corpses shall arise ; (wake and sing ye that dwell in the dust !)* for the dew of herbs is *Thy dew*, and (on) the earth, (on) the dead, *Thou wilt cause it to fall*. This verse is in the strongest contrast with the one before it. To the ineffectual efforts of the people to save themselves, he now opposes their actual deliverance by God. They shall rise because they are *Thy dead*—i.e., Thy dead people.

Awake, etc., is a joyful apostrophe to the dead, after which the address to Jehovah is resumed. The reference to the dew is intended to illustrate the vivifying power of God. The obvious meaning of the words is an expression of strong confidence and hope, or rather of prophetic foresight, that God *will* raise the dead, that His life-giving power will be exerted. *A.*

Here the tone changes from sorrow, failure, to life, prosperity and exultant joy. Those who chant this song are themselves of *Zion*, and speak for her as well as for themselves. "Thy dead, O Zion, shall live again." Thy people have been virtually, civilly, nationally dead ; but they shall have a resurrection. "Being My dead body"—the dead of Zion—"they shall rise again." Because these dead are God's people, members of His own Zion, their resurrection from this death is certain. Then, thrilled with the blessed thought, the prophet gives utterance to the voice of God within him, "Awake and sing, ye that lie buried in dust ; awake ; come forth from your (figurative) graves, and break out in song as ye come up to the light of day and of this new life. For the dew that fell on thy dead body was like the dew of heaven upon vegetation—vivifying, restoring the withered and almost dying plants to life." The last clause will bear this appropriate and beautiful translation, "And on the earth, on the dead thou wilt make it fall." Naturally, the song turns to address Jehovah, who sends down the dew from the lower heavens, and much more His life-giving word of power to raise the dead. This resurrection of God's people stands in contrast with the denial of resurrection to the wicked rulers of Babylon in verse 14. This passage proves beyond a question that the idea of a resurrection from the dead was familiar to the prophet and to his first readers for whose immediate use he wrote. As no writer *could* draw a figure from what was unknown to himself, so, if he sought to teach, he *would* not draw one from what was unknown to his readers. As Isaiah could not talk about a resurrection if he had never known the idea and the words to express it, so he would not expect to be understood unless his readers were also familiar with it. *H. C.*

This was undoubtedly one of those texts upon which the ancient Jews grounded their belief of the resurrection, the hope of which was founded on "the law and the prophets," as Paul tells them (Acts 24 : 14). *W. Lowth.*—The ancient Jews understood this passage so ; the prophet speaks of the figurative and typical resurrection of the Jewish State and

Church, but the phraseology is taken from the resurrection of the last day, and to it is our attention intended to be directed. *Vitringo.*

"Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs"—i.e., as dew revives the herbage, so does the power of God revive thee, and the earth brings forth the shades (the dead). Till then the people are to wait quietly. On the day of the final judgment for which the Lord arises (verse 21), the earth discloses her blood, and no more covers her slain; these being, according to the most probable explanation, awakened to new life, obtain their justification. That the resurrection (verse 19) must not here be regarded as typical (as though only the deliverance of the people of God from their troubles were intended) is evident from the contrast in verse 12 and the whole context. O.—This (as Ezekiel's vision, which is a comment upon it) may be fitly accommodated: 1. To the spiritual resurrection of those that were dead in sin, by the power of Christ's Gospel and grace. So Dr. Lightfoot applies it. The Gentiles shall live, with My body shall they arise; they shall be called in after Christ's resurrection, shall rise with Him, and sit with Him in heavenly places; nay, they shall arise My body (says He); they shall become the mystical body of Christ, and shall rise as part of Him. 2. To the last resurrection; when dead saints shall live and rise together with Christ's dead body; for He rose as the firstfruits, and believers shall rise by virtue of their union with Him, and their communion in His resurrection. H.

Awake. The act of dying is but a laying one's self down to rest, and a dropping out of consciousness of the surrounding world. It is very remarkable and very beautiful that the New Testament scarcely ever employs the words dying and death for the act of separating body and spirit, or for the condition either of the spirit parted from the body, or of the body parted from the spirit. It keeps those grim words for the reality, the separation of the soul from God; and it only exceptionally uses them for the shadow and the symbol, the physical fact of the parting of the man from the house which here he has dwelt in. But the reason why Christianity uses these periphrases or metaphors, these euphemisms, for death, is the opposite of the reason why the world uses them. The world is so afraid of dying that it durst not name the grim, ugly thing. The Christian, or, at least, the Christian faith, is so little afraid of death, that it does not think such a trivial matter worth call-

ing by the name, but only names it "falling asleep." The sweet emblem suggests repose, and that in that sleep there are folded around the sleepers the arms of the Christ on whose bosom they rest, as an infant does on its first and happiest home, its mother's breast.

Besides that, the emblem suggests the idea of continuous and conscious existence. And it suggests the idea of waking. Sleep is a parenthesis. If the night comes, the morning comes. "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" They that sleep will awake, and be satisfied when they awake with Thy likeness. And so these three things—repose, conscious, continuous existence, and the certainty of awaking—all lie in that metaphor. Now, then, the risen Christ is the only ground of such hope, and faith in Him is the only state of mind which is entitled to cherish it. Nothing proves immortality except that open grave.

Though we know that much will be changed, that new powers will come and old wants and weaknesses fall away with new environment, still the essential self will be unchanged, and the life will run on without a break. There is no magic in the act of death which changes the set of a character, or the tendencies and desires of a nature. As you die, so you live after your death the same man and woman that you were when the blow fell. A. M.

Immediately after death the souls of believers are present with the person of Christ, and enjoy bright revelations of God and the society of the holy angels. . . . Nevertheless, as the complete man consists both of soul and body, the souls of the blessed during the interval between their death and the resurrection, although with Christ and inconceivably happy, have not attained to the perfection of either glory or blessedness, which is designed for them in Christ. The highest state of all must await the redemption of their bodies and of their purchased possession, and of the restitution of all things. *A. A. Hodge.*—That this is the teaching of the Holy Scriptures is evident from Christ's promise to His disciples at the supper in Jerusalem: "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, ye may be also" (John 14:3); from the promise to the dying thief: "to-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43); from the parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16:23, 24); from the prayer of Stephen, who said that he saw heaven opened and Jesus standing in full view, and then cried: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Paul did not believe in any intermediate place, or in any sleep of the soul between death and

the resurrection. He writes to the Philippians that he has a desire to depart and be with Christ. He tells the Corinthians that dying is like going out of a tent into a building of God. He adds that "mortality is swallowed up of life"—not of slumber and sweet dreams. He speaks in Eph. 3 : 15 of the Church as one family, partly on earth and partly in heaven. John tells us that, when he was in the spirit on Patmos, he saw a great multitude before the throne of God and the Lamb who had "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," and who are, "therefore, before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His Temple." These are the spirits of "the redeemed from the earth," and they are in heaven. And in the fourteenth chapter we have a vision of the Lamb, with a hundred and forty-four thousand who sang before the throne a new song. These singers, we are expressly told, were redeemed from the earth. *C. E. Babb.*

It is the connection with Christ that gives the safety and the glory. They died with Him; they rose with Him; they suffered with Him; they shall be glorified with Him. The wish of all believers in this world has been, We would see Jesus! Then they shall see Him surrounded by all who have loved Him. "We know not what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." This is the Apostle John's idea of heaven, "We shall see Him as He is." This will be enough. Here we have seen by glimpses, cloudily, in an enigma, "through a glass darkly;" but then, clearly, nearly, fully, "face to face." And the object so seen is of all in the universe the most worthy of being contemplated. God shines in Him. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." To see Him, in the fulness of His unveiled excellence, will be a celestial pleasure, well worth dying for. *J. W. A.*

The perfect life of the dead in Christ is growth without a limit and without decline. To say that they are ever young is the same thing as to say that their being never reaches its climax, that it is ever but entering on its glory. That is, as we have said, the true conception of their life is that of eternal progress toward infinite perfection. For what is the goal to which they tend? The likeness of God in Christ—all His wisdom, His love, His holiness. He is all theirs, and all that He is to be transfused into their growing greatness. "He is made unto them of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and salvation and redemption," nor can they cease

to grow till they have outgrown Jesus and exhausted God. On the one hand is infinite perfection, destined to be imparted to the redeemed spirit. On the other hand is a capability of indefinite assimilation to, by reception of that infinite perfection. We have no reason to set bounds to the possible expansion of the human spirit. If only there be fitting circumstances and an adequate impulse, it may have an endless growth. Such circumstances and such impulse are given in the loving presence of Christ in glory. Therefore we look for an eternal life which shall never reach a point, beyond which no advance is possible.

Peter speaks of the believer's departure as "an entrance ministered abundantly." The going out is a going in; looked at from this side, it is a going out; looked at from the other side, it is a coming in. So, when we see a life of which Christian faith has been the underlying motive, and in which many Christian graces have been plainly manifested, passing from among us, let not our love look only at the empty place on earth, but let our faith rise to the thought of the filled place in heaven. Let us not dwell on the departure, but on the abundant entrance. *A. M.*

The old familiar love that blessed us here will greet us in the realms beyond. The daughter of Jairus was restored to the family circle. When she opened her eyes she found father and mother around her bed, as they had been when she fell asleep. We can see in this fact an earnest and type of what shall be the mode of life in the world beyond; an assurance that God will begin our resurrection life, as He began our life here on earth, among those we have known and loved, and in the bosom of the family circle. The "Talitha cumi" of the wonderful miracle teaches us that it is love that quickens the dead soul; that it is love that quickens the mortal body. It is love that builds the earthly home; it is love that builds the heavenly home. And the highest conception we can form of heaven is glorified affection. The sympathies and affections are the primal and the most indestructible elements of our nature, that which we have nearest God and likest God. God is love; and love is love forevermore. *Hugh Macmillan.*

20. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers. The prophet appears here in the person of God to confirm the hopes and expectations contained in the preceding hymn of the faithful, by an exhortation to patience and promise of support and deliverance from all the judgments and persecutions which

might in aftertimes befall the people of God, or Church of Christ ; to terminate with those terrible but short calamities, which shall be in the days of Antichrist emphatically so called. *Vitringa*.—The prophet by an exquisite transition intimates that this relief from the effects of God's displeasure with His people must be

preceded by the experience of the displeasure itself, that it is still a time of indignation, and that till this is elapsed the promise cannot be fulfilled. This painful postponement of the promised resurrection could not be more tenderly or beautifully intimated than in this fine apostrophe. A.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXVII.

- 27 : 1 In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the swift serpent, and leviathan the crooked serpent ; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.
- 2, 3 In that day : A vineyard of wine, sing ye unto it. I the LORD do keep it ; I will water it every moment : lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. Fury is not in me : would that the briers and thorns were against me in battle ! I would march upon them, I would burn them together. Or else let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me ;
- 6 *yea*, let him make peace with me. In days to come shall Jacob take root ; Israel shall blossom and bud : and they shall fill the face of the world with fruit.
- 7 Hath he smitten him as he smote those that smote him ? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that were slain by him ? In measure, when thou sendest her away, thou dost contend with her ; he hath removed *her* with his rough blast in the day of the east wind.
- 9 Therefore by this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit of taking away his sin ; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, *so that* the Asherim and the sun-images shall rise no more. For the defenced city is solitary, an habitation deserted and forsaken, like the wilderness : there shall the calf feed,
- 11 and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof. When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off ; the women shall come, and set them on fire : for it is a people of no understanding ; therefore he that made them will not have compassion upon them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.
- 12 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall beat off *his fruit*, from the flood of the River unto the brook of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.
- 13 And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great trumpet shall be blown ; and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and they that were outcasts in the land of Egypt ; and they shall worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

Chap. 27. The topics briefly introduced in the two closing verses of chap. 26 are here resumed and made the subject of this chapter. On the one hand, chastisements for God's people in moderation and in mercy, watched over with the tender care and compassion of a father's heart, and designed only to reclaim and purify ; and, on the other, retributive judgments sent in stern but just severity on the incorrigible who will be nothing but enemies to God. The two processes are carried forward jointly in this description, the writer alternat-

ing from one to the other throughout the chapter for the purpose of comparing the discipline brought on God's people with the retributive judgments visited upon His persistent enemies. H. C.

This chapter is an amplification of the last verse of the one preceding, and contains a fuller statement both of Israel's chastisements and of Jehovah's judgments on His enemies. The destruction of the latter is foretold as the slaughter of a huge sea monster, and contrasted with God's care of His own people even when

afflicting them (verses 1-5). Hereafter Israel shall flourish, and even, in the mean time, His sufferings are far less than those of His oppressors (verses 6, 7). The former is visited in moderation for a time, and with the happiest effect (verses 8, 9). The latter is finally and totally destroyed (verses 10, 11). This shall be followed by the restoration of the scattered Jews (verses 12, 13). A.

1. "In that day," when those things are done which are referred to in chap. 26:20, 21. "Leviathan," a sea serpent or other monster of the sea, sometimes the crocodile of Egypt and the "dragon," are animals frequently named as symbols or figures to represent the great political powers that were specially hostile and oppressive to God's people. Leviathan appears in this character Ps. 74:14, and the dragon in Ezek. 29:3 and 32:2, and Isa. 51:9. Both, being at once formidable and loathsome, are fit emblems for a great persecuting, oppressive power. There can be no doubt that they refer here to Babylon; possibly to Egypt also. Babylon we know is before the prophet's mind, and there is no special objection to supposing that both terms refer to the same enemy.

3. Keeping up the figure of the vineyard, the verse represents the Lord's constant, precious care that no real harm shall befall His vineyard. He truly loves His people. Never is this love more actively drawn out than while they are in the furnace of affliction; or, according to this figure, than while foes are coming down upon His vineyard who may crush His vines to the earth, or burn them fatally. H. C.

I will keep it night and day. Grace is determined to complete what it has begun, and to perform the good work unto the day of redemption. The whole Church is given to Christ in covenant, and every individual believer has his share in the blessed security. Looking at the internal strength of the Church, we may say it is endangered; but looking at the covenant, it is safe. "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." God's honor is concerned to bring the disciple through, in spite of all enemies. J. W. A.

Perseverance is not only a condition, but a privilege of the covenant of grace; for it assures supply of spiritual strength to the sincere believer for performing the condition it requires. If grace were the mere product of free will, the most fervent resolutions would vanish into a lie upon the assault of an overpowering temptation. But sanctifying grace is the effect of the Holy Spirit; and he that

"begins that good work in the saints will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." He that inclined them joyfully to choose the spiritual eternal good will bind their unconstant hearts, that by a faithful adherence they shall cleave to their duty and felicity. God hath most graciously declared, "I will put My Spirit into their heart, that they shall never depart from me." Bates.

It is not usual with God to leave His people frequently to relapse into enormities; for by His spirit and grace, by His smiles and frowns, by His word and rod He usually preserves them from these; yet He does leave His choicest ones frequently to relapse into *infirmities* (and of His grace He pardons them in course), as idle words, passion and vain thoughts. And though gracious souls strive against, complain of, and weep over these, yet the Lord, to keep them humble, leaves them oftentimes to such relapses; but they shall never be their bane, because they are their burden. T. Brooks.

If we have ever so little sincere desire to serve Him and to be His, is it not absolutely certain, from the whole tenor of His words and deeds, that He will meet us more than half way, and bring us on in the right path with more than a mother's tenderness? For every responsibility which we have to meet, He offers to qualify us. For every height which we have to climb, He furnishes an inward strength. We need not faint then at any prospect before us. Progress in grace may be arduous, difficult, impossible to flesh and blood—out of the question, it may be said, while living in the old world; but to all alleged difficulties there is one simple answer, "He giveth more grace." E. M. G.

4. I am no longer angry with My people; oh that their enemies (as thorns and briers) would array themselves against Me, that I might rush upon them and consume them. This is the sense of the verse preferred by most of the later writers.

5. Or let him lay hold of My strength and make peace with Me; peace let him make with Me. The verbs are properly indefinite (let one take hold, etc.), but referring to the enemy described in the preceding verse. The general meaning is that the alternative presented is destruction or submission. A.—I can convey the meaning of this passage so that every one may understand it, by what took place in my own family within these few days. One of my little children had committed a fault for which I thought it my duty to chastise him. I called him to me, explained to him the evil of

what he had done, and told him how grieved I was that I must punish him for it. He heard me in silence, and then rushed into my arms and burst into tears. I could sooner have cut off my arm than have then struck him for his fault; he had taken hold of my strength, and he had made peace with me. *Thomas Toller (quoted by R. Hall).*

Here is a gracious invitation given us to get these matters in variance accommodated: "Let him that is desirous to be at peace with God take hold on His strength, on His strong arm which is lifted up against the sinner, and let him by supplication keep back the stroke; let him wrestle with Me, as Jacob did, resolving not to let Me go without a blessing; and he shall be Israel—a prince with God." Pardon—mercy is called the power of our Lord; let him take hold on that. Christ is the "arm of the Lord" (53: 1). "Christ crucified is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1: 24); let him by a lively faith take hold on Him as a man that is sinking catches hold of a bough or cord or plank that is in his reach; or as the malefactor took hold on the horns of the altar, believing that there is no other name by which he can be saved, by which he can be reconciled. H.—The strong in faith grasp and keep hold of the promises. They take God at His word. They have believed in Christ, and they know that in Him all the promises are Yea and Amen. With Christ, the greater gift, they know God in His kingdom of grace will freely give us all things. Resting on the promises they pray, and their prayers are deeds. They put God upon His faithfulness, and He honors it and answers them. They wrestle with Him as if they actually had a hold upon Him. Rising up thus in a mighty energy of prayer to God, their souls have wrought with prayerful energy in the world, and their great works for God have marked the history of their race and have changed its currents. *Anon.*

In the Christian life it is invariably true that real strength comes only out of that weakness which, distrustful of itself, gives itself up to God. It is invariably true that weakness grows out of the conceit which refuses to depend, and which trusts its own wisdom or strength. It is invariably true that God's strength shines through human infirmity, and often selects for its best and richest expressions the poorest, weakest, most burdened of mankind. *Vincent.*—Each new want in us seems to act, as by magnetic influence, in drawing down Divine fulness to meet it; it is a new appeal to His free love, and a new opportunity for its exer-

cise; it is a new knock at His gracious door; it is a new stroke of the rod upon the rock, making the waters to gush forth, and the streams to run down in the desert. Those *infirmities* of ours, with which we are so often afraid to come to Him, are just the very things which appeal to His strength, and afford occasion for its exercise. They draw it out; they bring it into play; they give it full scope; and thus, instead of making us unwelcome or intrusive applicants, they furnish us with the very claims which He delights to recognize, with the very recommendation which He loves to accept. Instead of separating us, they bring us more closely and directly into contact with Him; they open up to us more of His excellency; they give us a deeper and truer experience of His mighty fulness; they unfold to us something of the inexhaustible resources of His infinite treasure-house of blessing; they afford us an insight into the unsearchable riches of His grace; they bring us acquainted more intimately, more lovingly, more blessedly, with Himself and His love. *Anon.*

For the daily toil of our daily task, with all its disheartening weariness, its trying disappointments, its depressing sense of comparative failure, for the greater conflicts, too, and trials of our ministry, with their sudden pressure of unforeseen difficulties, their sharper anxieties, their keener hopes and fears—for all these there is one, and but one, never-failing source of comfort and of help, one place alone where we may renew our strength—it is at the foot of the cross. There, as we kneel and pray—there, as we kneel and hope—there, as we kneel and vow—as we offer ourselves once more, in the love of our hearts, in the labor of our lives, as willing sacrifices unto God—will there come into our hearts the peace, born not of ease and comfort, but of a death agony of fear, and yet of faith, the peace which came of the vision, seen from afar, of the accomplished travail of the soul of Him who died to win it for us, and with that peace will come the strength it gives, the strength of a heart at one with God, strong in its resolve to do or to suffer His holy will, asking of Him but one thing, to be better taught what that will may be. *Abp. Magee.*

6. Keeping up still the figure of the vine, the Lord gives a precious promise of future enlargement and prosperity, such enlargement as will overspread the face of the world, such prosperity as will fill all the earth with the fruits of His vineyard. God's correction of His people in discipline, so far from defeating such results, ensures and hastens them.

7. This verse comes back to the great thought of the chapter—viz., that God's smiting of His people is entirely a different thing from His smiting of their enemies. It is moderate in degree, and is not mortal in result. The question put here implies the strongest negation. H. C.

8. *In measure, by sending her away, thou dost contend with her. He removes her by his hard wind in the day of the east wind.* The negation implied in the preceding verse is here expressed more distinctly. The prophet now proceeds to show that Israel was not dealt with like His enemies, by first describing what the former suffered, then what the latter. Israel was punished moderately, and for a time, by being removed out of His place, as if by a transient storm or blast of wind. A.

9. The facts of history have fully justified this strong prediction that the captivity in Babylon should effectually cure the nation of idolatry. Our passage shows this to have been the special purpose of God in this captivity. So His purpose in all the afflictions sent upon His children is definitely to *purify*, to make the heart and life better. When God's people truly hunger and thirst after personal righteousness, appreciating heart-purity in some good degree at its real value, they will bless God with overflowing heart for the discipline He finds it wise and needful to inflict, grateful if by any means they may be made more like God, and so more acceptable in His sight.

10, 11. These verses take up the case of God's enemies. The passage stands logically connected with verse 7, the intermediate verses (8, 9) having spoken of God's people. This begins, "*For*" (not "*yet*"), "*for*" (as if to develop more fully the fearful scourging of the wicked) "*the strongly fortified city is made desolate.*" The city here thought of is Babylon, seen here forsaken, desolate and made like a wilderness; calves feeding and lying down there; browsing and cropping off all its foliage. Or by yet another figure: when the boughs are withered they are broken off, and then women (who in Oriental life gathered the fuel) came and gathered them to burn—not precisely to set fire to where they lay, but to gather as fuel for household use. Then, dropping all figure, the Lord assigns the reason for such exterminating judgments. They will not consider and understand; will not learn God either through His mercies or His judgments; are therefore unteachable and incorrigible; hence God can show them no mercy. All efforts to enlighten them failing, no hope remains of their turning

to God; and therefore destruction must be their doom. H. C.

11. **Of no understanding.** A severe judgment from God is described in the words preceding. Here the reason for the judgment is assigned as a guilty ignorance. An ignorance that cannot be helped or remedied is deservedly excused. But an ignorance caused by wilful neglect of the means of knowledge is not excusing, but condemning. Some want of understanding is so far from excusing sin that it is its highest aggravation. In the words that follow, note the strange terms in which God expresses His anger. He assumes the most endearing titles, and under them announces the severest judgments. He joins the creator and the destroyer, expressions that almost confute each other; He clothes Himself in the robes of mercy, and in these pronounces the sentence of death upon the sinner. The remaining words anticipate and forestall an objection frequently in the mouths of the ignorant and in the hearts of the most knowing: that certainly God would never make them to destroy them; and therefore, since He has made them, they roundly conclude that He will not destroy them. *South.*

12, 13. This chapter, and indeed this entire prophetic message of four chapters, closes with a promise of the restoration of God's people from Babylon ("Assyria") and from Egypt. All are to be gathered from the channel of the river (Euphrates) to the stream of Egypt. The expression, "*shall beat off*," gives us the figure of beating off olives from their tree. So the Lord will carefully gather up His people scattered in their captivity. It is not precisely "*gathered one by one*," but rather *one to one*—i.e., one to another; brought together from their dispersions. The blowing of the Lord's great trumpet is the signal for this assembling of the outcast and almost perishing exiles. Restored, they worship the Lord (as their fathers did) in the holy mount at Jerusalem. This was definitely fulfilled under Zerubbabel and Ezra. It closed the scene of the great captivity at Babylon. H. C.

13. **A great trumpet shall be blown.** Blessed, eternally blessed be our God, for the blowing of the great trumpet of Gospel grace; it is the sound of great love; it proclaims a great salvation—to whom? Even to great sinners; such as see their sins so great that they are *ready to perish*. The sound of this great trumpet proclaims that "*the great God*" is "*our Saviour Jesus Christ*." It proclaims victory over sin, the law, Satan, death and

hell, through Jesus, who loved us and gave Himself for us. Nor less doth it proclaim holiness than happiness; for it calls us to war with our sins, to peace with God, and to walk in sweet fellowship with God the Father, and His

Son, Jesus Christ. This great Gospel trumpet does not give an uncertain sound; but it proclaims a free, full and finished salvation by Christ, to the glory of God, yea and amen.
W. Mason.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXVIII.

WOE ON SAMARIA AND THE NORTHERN KINGDOM, AND ON JUDAH.

28:1 WOE to the crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim, and to the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley of them that are overcome with wine! Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one; as a tempest of hail, a destroying storm, as a tempest of mighty waters overflowing, shall he cast down to the earth with the hand. The crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot: and the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be as the firstripe fig before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up. In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people: and for a spirit of judgement to him that sitteth in judgement, and for strength to them that turn back the battle at the gate. But these also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are gone astray; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are gone astray through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgement.

8, 9 For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean. Whom will he teach knowledge? and whom will he make to understand the message? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts? For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little. Nay, but by men of strange lips and with another tongue will he speak to this people: to whom he said, This is the rest, give ye rest to him that is weary; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. Therefore shall the word of the LORD be unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little; that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

14 Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem: Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

17 And I will make judgement the line, and righteousness the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. As often as it passeth through, it shall take you; for morning by morning shall it pass through, by day and by night: and it shall be nought but terror to understand the message. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon; that he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act. Now therefore be ye not scorers, lest your bands be made strong: for a consummation, and that determined, have I heard from the Lord, the LORD of hosts, upon the whole earth.

23, 24 Give ye ear, and hear my voice ; hearken, and hear my speech. Doth the plowman plow
 25 continually to sow ? doth he *continually* open and break the clods of his ground ? When he
 hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin,
 and put in the wheat in rows and the barley in the appointed place and the spelt in the bor-
 26, 27 der thereof ? For his God doth instruct him aright, *and* doth teach him. For the fitches
 are not threshed with a sharp *threshing* instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon
 28 the cummin ; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Bread
corn is ground ; for he will not ever be threshing it : and though the wheel of his cart and
 29 his horses scatter it, he doth not grind it. This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts,
 which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom.

THE WOES ON ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS.
 CHAPTERS 28-35.

AFTER the burdens on the Gentile nations, and their sequel, the prophecy returns more directly to the chosen people. Four successive woes are denounced on Samaria, Jerusalem and on all those in Israel who resorted to Egypt for help, instead of resting in faith on the promise of God. These are followed by another prediction of the times of Messiah, a direct woe on the Assyrian, a more general warning of judgment on the heathen, and a closing prophecy of Messiah's coming, and the full redemption of Israel.

The first woe (chap. 28) announces the fall of Samaria as near at hand. Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, here called the proud crown or garland of the drunkards of Ephraim, was built by Omri, and became a place of great wealth and luxury under the following kings. It was besieged by Benhadad (2 K. 6, 7) and reduced to great extremity, but signally delivered. After a three years' siege it was taken by Shalmaneser or Sargon, and reduced to a heap of ruins (Mic. 1:6). This event followed very soon after the present prophecy, which was probably just at the opening of Hezekiah's reign. It afterward revived, and was restored by Herod the Great, who gave it the name Sebaste in honor of Augustus Cæsar ; and this name, slightly varied, is retained by a small village which still occupies its site.

The warning passes on, as before, from Ephraim to Judah, and denounces the sensual blindness and pride of the rulers, when the judgment of God, after lighting on Israel, was just ready to visit the southern kingdom. The scourge of the Assyrian armies would soon pass over to Judah, and all their false hopes of deliverance from Egypt would perish. But the promise of Messiah would secure the preservation of a faithful remnant ; and the holy discipline of God, however severe, would issue in a harvest of righteousness and praise. The last verses

unfold this truth in a striking parable, drawn from the various processes of natural husbandry.

Chap. 28. This prophecy, as appears from its opening verses, belongs to the earlier years of the reign of Hezekiah. The final siege of Samaria, ending in the destruction of the city, which is here represented as imminent, lasted from the fourth to the sixth year of Hezekiah (2 K. 18:9, 10). Shortly before that siege began the prophet depicts the judgment that shall overwhelm the northern kingdom in their drunken revelry and carnal security (verses 1-6). He then turns to Judah, who are given up to the same sins (verses 7, 8), and who scoffingly repel the admonitions and warnings of the prophet (verses 9, 10), and tells them that, since they refuse to hear God's message of peace and safety, He would speak to them by foreign invaders, to their fall and ruin (verses 11-13). Refusing the sure ground of dependence which God had established in Zion, their trust was in a refuge of lies, which would fail them in their extremity (verses 14-18). W. H. G.—Their impious contempt of God and self-reliance shall but hasten their destruction. All who do not build upon the sure foundation laid in Zion must inevitably perish as the enemies of Israel were destroyed of old (verses 14-22). The delay of judgment no more proves that it will never come, than the patience of the husbandman and his preparatory labors prove that he expects no harvest ; and the difference of God's dealings with different men is no more inconsistent with His general purposes of wrath or mercy than the husbandman's treatment of the different grains is inconsistent with his general purpose of securing and enjoying them (verses 23-29).

1. Here, as in chap. 9:9, 21 ; 11:13, we are to understand by *Ephraim* the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, by the *drunkards of Ephraim* its vicious population, and by the *lofty crown* the city of Samaria, so called as the chief town and the royal residence, but also with allusion to its local situation on an insulated hill overlooking

a rich plain or valley. *Wine, smitten or wine-stricken* is a strong description of the intellectual and moral effects of drunkenness. Gill's lively paraphrase is : smitten, beaten, knocked down with it as with a hammer, and laid prostrate on the ground, where they lie fixed to it, not able to get up. A.—The luxurious self-indulgence of the inhabitants of Samaria and their drinking to intoxication, a vice that infected even the women (Amos 4 : 1), are severely reproved by both Hosea (Hos. 4 : 11 ; 7 : 5) and Amos (Amos 6 : 4-6). That which awakens the displeasure of God and stirs the indignation of the prophet is both the criminality of these excesses in themselves and the moral insensibility which accompanied them and resulted from them. W. H. G.

Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim.

This may be more exactly translated, "The crown of the pride of Ephraim's drunkards"—that is, Samaria—for her people were both drunken with wine and intoxicated with pride. The frequent references in this chapter to the garlands or crowns of flowers worn by the drunkards reveals, when carefully examined by the light of profane history, an awful and systematic indulgence in excess of wine. The use of chaplets at festive entertainments sprang up at an early period in Egypt, whence, no doubt, the Israelites derived it ; but it reached its climax in Greece. It was part of a deliberate intention to drink to excess and to mitigate the effects of intoxication. The wreaths were bound tightly round the head, and were composed of various flowers and shrubs, which were supposed to carry off the fumes of wine, such as roses, violets, myrtle and ivy. In later times the custom spread to Rome ; but the old Romans before the empire had some regard for decency, and revellers who appeared with their garlands in public were punished with imprisonment. The descriptions which have come down to us of the orgies of the Dionysia, when all the votaries of Bacchus wore ivy wreaths, present a hideous picture. It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

The fading flower ; the firstripe fig.

Samaria, that crown of the drunkard's pride, notwithstanding its glorious beauty, shall wither as a fading flower from the reveller's chaplet. There is much in the natural configuration of Samaria and its neighborhood which adds force to the poetic language of the prophet. The site of Herod's Samaria, which, there is little doubt, occupies the exact position

of the city of Omri, crowns a gently rising circular hill, from the base of which a wide, grassy plain sweeps in a perfect amphitheatre, encircled by a loftier mountain range. There is but one break in the mountain wall, and that reveals a view of the wide plain of Sharon and the sea beyond. The ruins which crown the central hill suggest the idea of a ruined crown, the bare columns representing the bare stems and stalks from which every flower and leaf has been stripped. Again, the "fat valleys" (or, literally, "the valleys of oil") still deserve the epithet, studded, as all of them are, with rich and ancient olive yards straggling in every direction. Again, this fading flower is to be "as the hasty fruit before the summer," or, as the Revised Version more accurately renders it, "as the firstripe fig before the summer," which is easily seen, and is at once gathered and eaten by the passer-by. *Tristram*.

2. The mighty and strong one of the Lord, or appointed by Him for the work of judgment, is the king of Assyria, Shalmaneser or Sargon, who completed the overthrow. He is described (as in chap. 10) as the tool or instrument to execute the warnings of God. He would soon pluck this proud and beautiful garland from the head of the drunkards of Ephraim, and cast it down to the earth with His hand, as a fierce tempest or flood sweeps everything away before it.

3, 4. The figures in the first verse are here carried further. The proud crown or garland of the drunkards, when the spoiler has torn it from their brows, and cast it on the ground, will be trodden under his feet. Samaria, the glorious beauty or ornament of Ephraim, would be indeed like a fading flower, a wreath withering away ; and also like the early fig, which drops when the tree is shaken, and which he who sees it no sooner sets his eyes upon than he devours it with greedy haste. *Birks*.

5, 6. But storms sweep the air clear, and everything will not go down before this one. The flower fadeth, but there is a chaplet of beauty which men may wreath round their heads, which shall bloom forever. All sensuous enjoyment has its limits in time, as well as in nobleness and exquisiteness ; but when it is all done with, the beauty and festal ornament which truly crowns humanity shall smell sweet and blossom. The prophecy had regard simply to the issue of the historical disaster to which it pointed, and meant that, after the storm of Assyrian conquest, there would still be, for the servants of God, the residue of the people, both in Israel and in Judah, a fuller possession of the

blessings which descend on the men who make God their portion. But the principle involved is forever true. The sweeping away of the perishable does draw true hearts nearer to God. So the two halves of this prophecy give us eternal truths as to the certain destruction awaiting the joys of sense and the permanence of the beauty and strength which belong to those who take God for their portion. Drunkenness seems to have been a national sin in Israel; for Micah rebukes it as vehemently as Isaiah, and it is a clear bit of Christian duty in America and England to-day to "set the trumpet to thy mouth" and show the people this sin.

But the lessons of the prophecy are wider than the specific form of evil denounced. All setting of affection and seeking of satisfaction in that which, in all the pride of its beauty, is "a fading flower," is madness and sin. Into every life thus turned to the perishable will come the crash of the destroying storm, the mutterings of which might reach the ears of the feasters, if they were not drunk with the fumes of their deceiving delights. Only one kind of life has its roots in that which abides, and is safe from tempest and change. Amaranthine flowers bloom only in heaven, and must be brought thence if they are to garland earthly foreheads. If we take God for ours, then whatever tempests may howl, and whatever fragile though fragrant joys may be swept away, we shall find in Him all that the world fails to give to its votaries. He is "a crown of glory" and "a diadem of beauty." Our humanity is never so fair as when it is made beautiful by the possession of Him. All which sense vainly seeks in earth, faith finds in God. Nor only beauty, but "a spirit of judgment," in its narrower sense and in its widest, is breathed into those to whom God is "the master light of all their seeing;" and, yet more, He is strength to all who have to fight. Thus the close union of trustful souls with God, the actual inspiration of these, and the perfecting of their nature from communion with God, are taught us in the great words, which tell how beauty, justice and strength are all given in the gift of Jehovah Himself to His people.

7, 8. The prophet turns to Judah, and charges them with the same disgusting debauchery. His language is vehement in its loathing, and describes the filthy orgies of those who should have been the guides of the people with almost painful realism. A. M.

That even these men, the nominal prophets and priests of Judah, should reel and stag-

ger through wine; blunder and err themselves and mislead others through strong drink; that their shameless intoxication should foul their very tables, so as to leave no place undefiled—this is truly a dark picture! It must be that in those days wine-drinking made men drunk. H. C.

Intemperance is the most ghastly and God-defying and man-depraving crime of our age. It is a sin which associates every manner of sin with it. It is an evil for the measurement of which arithmetic gives us no figures, and speech no descriptive terms. It debauches the conscience of the nation. It pollutes the blood of the people with diseases unnamable in decent society. It blasts the brow of youth with a deadly mildew; bends the back of manhood to the burdens of poverty, and blots out the star of hope by the blaze of the fires of hell. And for the extermination of this extortionate enemy of all righteousness there is one, and but one, remedy. And that is, the cordial agreement of those who realize its awfulness, in methods for destroying it. *Withdraw.*

The drinker has no shadow of excuse for his course. He does everything in spite of everything. Every inducement of healthy mind and body is against it. But the foolish hardness and perversity of a devil's nature drives from step to step, until habits, environment, everything, have been revolutionized, and the man is another self. Then he may not stop. Then he may not be accountable. But he is responsible for the foolishness and hardness that has brought him into the place he now stands. God pity the drunkard; but what pity for the self who made the drunkard, and recklessly and ruthlessly ruined the man that might have been. Here in these ranks is many a Cain, whose punishment is greater than he can bear; many a sunken hulk who only knows what he once was; many who could bear witness to the truth of the proverb: "At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

F. S. Arnold.

The two unanswerable arguments against the drinking usages are these: An alcoholic beverage endangers me if I tamper with it; it endangers my fellow-man if I offer it to him. My Bible teaches me to let it alone for the sake of the "weak" and those who stumble. Ah, those stumblers! How many wrecks the word reveals! How many tombs it opens, whose charitable turf hides out of sight what surviving kindred would love to hide from memory! For Jesus' sake, and for the sake of the easily tempted, who will hide behind our example,

let us who call ourselves Christians put away this bottled devil, which conceals damnation under its ruby glow. This subject of self-surrender for Jesus' sake is as wide as the domain of Christian duty. To live for Christ is the sweetest and holiest life we can live; to live for self is the most wretched. Every cross is turned into a crown, every burden becomes a blessing, every sacrifice becomes sacred and sublime the moment that our Lord and Redeemer writes on it "*For My sake.*" *Cuyler.*

9-13. The scoffers mentioned below (verse 14) are here introduced as uttering their sententious speeches; they treat God's method of dealing with them and warning them by His prophets with contempt and derision. What, say they, doth He treat us as mere infants just weaned? doth He teach us like little children, perpetually inculcating the same elementary lessons, the mere rudiments of knowledge; precept after precept, line after line, here and there, by little and little? imitating at the same time, and ridiculing (in verse 10) the concise prophetic manner. God, by His prophet (verses 11-13), retorts upon them with great severity their own contemptuous mockery, turning it to a sense quite different from what they intended. Yes, saith He, it shall be in fact as you say; ye shall be taught by a strange tongue and a stammering lip; in a strange country; ye shall be carried into captivity by a people whose language shall be unintelligible to you, and which ye shall be forced to learn like children. And My dealing with you shall be according to your own words; it shall be command upon command for your punishment; it shall be line upon line, stretched over you to mark your destruction (cf. 2 K. 21: 13); it shall come upon you at different times and by different degrees; till the judgments, with which from time to time I have threatened you, shall have their full accomplishment. A. C.

9, 10. The loose livers of all generations talk in the same fashion about the stern morality which rebukes their vice. They call it weak, commonplace, fit for children, and they pretend that they despise it. They are much too enlightened for such antiquated teaching. Old women and children may take it in; but men of the world, who have seen life and know what is what, are not to be fooled so. "What will this babbler say?" was asked by the wise men of Athens, who were but repeating the scoffs of the prophets and priests of Jerusalem, and the same jeers are bitter in the mouths of many a profligate man to-day. It is the fate of all strict morality to be accounted childish by

the people whom it inconveniently condemns. A. M.

12. It enhanced their guilt that God had kindly promised them rest and refreshing, the best of blessings, but they would not hear. Omitting the words in italics, we may translate thus: "These are the men to whom God had said, This is the rest; give rest to the weary; this is the refreshing; but they would not hear." The Lord had plainly indicated that simple obedience to Himself, right-doing, would insure them rest and peace. He had exhorted them to lead all the people in this good way. They would neither walk in it themselves nor lead others. H. C.

13. The Old Testament is full of various and gracious repetition. God allowed for Israel's slowness to receive and their slackness to retain instruction. So He gave them line upon line and precept upon precept. This principle of God runs through all His works and through all His training of His people. On this principle alone man's moral culture and spiritual advancement can be attained. D. F.

The first part of this verse refers to the method in which God had taught them—*i.e.*, in successive yet brief messages pressed assiduously. The latter part gives the results. Since they would not hear, their end was *ruin*. The terms used to describe it correspond to those in chap. 24: 17, 18, the figures being a stone to stumble over and thus fall and be broken, and a pit to fall into. H. C.—Come what may, God is not mocked—that is, He will let no task be shirked in His school; and if men will not learn His lessons of eternal wisdom otherwise, He will certainly beat them into them by His judgments. And He will do this the more severely the more men have set them at naught. It is just because the natural man is so slow to receive them, that the Divine judgments have so much to do. *Hupfeld.*—If we will not be guided by His eye and voice, we shall be governed by whip and bridle. Our choice is either to hearken to the Divine call, which is loving and gentle, and invites to deep repose springing from faith, or to have to hear the voice of the taskmasters. The monotony of despised moral and religious teaching shall give place to a more terrible monotony, even that of continuous judgments. "The mills of God grind slowly." Bit by bit, with gradual steps, with dismal persistence, like the slow drops on the rock, the judgments of God trickle out on the mocking heart. It takes a long time for a child to learn a pageful when he gets his lesson a sentence at a time. So slowly do His chastise-

ments fall on men who have despised the continuous messages of His love. The word of the Lord, which was laughed at when it clothed itself in a prophet's speech, will be heard in more formidable shape when it is wrapped in the long-drawn-out miseries of years of bondage. The warning is as needful for us as for these drunken priests and scornful rulers. The principle embodied is true in this day as it was then, and we too have to choose between serving God in gladness, hearkening to the voice of His word, and so finding rest to our souls, and serving the world, the flesh, and the devil, and so experiencing the perpetual dropping of the fiery rain of His judgments. A. M.

14, 15. These scornful men must be the sensual, debased, drunken priests and prophets who were before us in verses 7, 8; who also scoffed at and repelled the assiduous labors of the true prophets in verses 9, 10. If it be asked *how* intelligent men can reach such hardihood of scepticism in defiance of their own reason, conscience, and experience, the answer is simply, *under the power of sin*. They love sinning; they have chosen it as their portion, and hence they *must* make lies their refuge. They are driven into falsehood as their only relief from the perpetual goadings of conscience. Errors and delusions become welcome to wicked men as a necessity of their moral nature and sinful state. They can have no peace without the help of lies and delusions. The passage before us puts these great moral facts in the philosophy of sinning in a light at once bold, clear and terribly truthful! H. C.

Erroneous opinions are criminal, because they falsify the Divine character and destroy the moral influence of the Divine law; because they are always voluntary, the result of criminal negligence to obtain correct knowledge, or of a criminal resistance of evidence, or perversion of the understanding through the depravity of the heart; and because the belief of error is always associated with moral and criminal affections. It is never a mere act of the understanding; the heart decides, and is never neutral. If a truth be rejected, it is also hated; if an error be embraced, it is also loved. It is because men have no pleasure in the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness, that they are given over to believe a lie; and are punished, for believing it, with everlasting destruction. The propagation of error is criminal, of course, because it is destructive to the souls of men; annihilating the influence of the Divine moral government, and the means by which God is accustomed to renew the soul. *Lyman Beecher.*

16. Thus saith the Lord. They are truly the Lord's words. It is the veritable language of the Infinite speaking through media to the finite mind, even as one unseen human soul speaks to another human soul, through the outward undulations of the air. And yet we do not mar the thought of the Infinite by any such conception. All things, in their imageless ideas, lie in that ineffable mind. But when God puts them forth in the forms of time and space—*i.e.*, *actually* thinks them and *utters* them, then one mode is as outward—*i.e.*, to Deity, as finite, as much necessitated to some form of sense, or sense conception, or sense imagery, as another. *T. Lewis.*

Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone. To the words of the scoffers are now opposed the words of God Himself. Because you say thus and thus, therefore the Lord says in reply what follows. You trust for safety in your own delusions; on the contrary, I lay a sure foundation, and no other can be laid. This foundation is the Messiah, to whom it is repeatedly and explicitly applied in the New Testament (Rom. 9:33; 10:11; 1 Pet. 2:6). A.

The course of thought here is admirable. The stone which wicked men stumble over and the lies under which they hide for refuge combine to suggest the better things which God provides for those who love and obey Him. He will lay in Zion a stone far other than that—a far more sure foundation, tried, proved and precious; whoever believeth shall not have occasion to flee in haste and perturbation. Beyond a doubt this corner and foundation stone is the Messiah, the sinner's real friend and refuge. So Peter believed and taught (1 Pet. 2:6-8). There is special pertinence in specifying *those who believe* as blessed in the Saviour. They are contrasted with the sceptical who make lies their refuge. There must always be essential scepticism underlying those bold, scornful attitudes of sinning mind. H. C.

So, says the prophet, shall be laid—and so, add apostles, has been laid—in the coming of Christ into the world, the enduring foundation on which the whole system of truth and of salvation for mankind is to arise. The solid corner of all is set in that unique constitution of His being, in which are hidden supremest wonders of power and glory. Because He is not, in their conception, a man like themselves, imperfect and finite, though of a rare religious genius; because He is not an angel, merely, bidden of God to mask His brightness beneath the figure and face of man, but not able really

to assume our nature or partake our experience ; because He is, as they behold Him, the Son of man, yet also truly the Son of God—whom neither chance, nor force, nor time, can strike with change ; in whom eternal perfections are combined with a tender and suffering sympathy for our need—therefore do His messengers command that this Lord be trusted forever by those who seek for their salvation ; therefore do they show Him the source and the support of that Divine life which through Him is revealed, to all the world, in all the ages. The mystery of Incarnation, which they recognize in Him, becomes the essential and unchangeable foundation on which is established whatever they afterward require or declare. R. S. S.

The plan of salvation was drawn in the eternal counsel. It is founded in the love of the Father ; effected by the obedience and sufferings of His Son. Hence what was contrived in infinite wisdom above is laid as a sure foundation in the Church below, by the love and power of the Spirit, the Comforter. It is His peculiar office to lay this foundation in Zion, and to manifest and make known to the prophets and apostles, teachers and saints, that Jesus is the only foundation ; as a stone for strength ; a tried stone, approved of by the Father, and by His children in all ages ; a precious corner-stone ; the ornament and beauty, as well as strength and security, of the whole Church. Precious is Christ in all His offices to them that believe : a sure foundation ; sure to all the seed ; certain to all the purposes of their salvation. And, as the Lord the Spirit lays this foundation in the Church in the truth of doctrine, so also in the faith and experience of all redeemed souls. What the word speaks of Jesus, that we prove and find Him to be. This is our mercy. "He that believeth shall not make haste." He shall possess such serenity and composure of mind that he shall not be frightened, in times of distress and calamity, to quit his confidence ; not be ashamed of his hope in the Lord. He will, by faith, patiently wait and quietly hope for the fulfilment of every promise. Sin and Satan shall not overcome him. In the awful hour of death he shall not be confounded, because his heart standeth fast, believing in the Lord. And when Jesus, his Friend, appears, he shall stand forth with boldness ; and shall find an abundant entrance into the presence of God and the Lamb, to live, and love, and reign in glory forever and ever.

W. Mason

Jesus Christ is *something* to each of us. For you who have heard His name ever since you

were children, your relation to Him settles your condition and your prospects, and moulds your character. Either He is for you the tried Corner-stone, the sure Foundation, on which whosoever builds will not be confounded, or He is a stone of stumbling, against which whosoever stumbles will be broken, and which will crush to powder whomsoever it falls upon. "This Child is set for the rise" or for the fall of all who hear His name ; He leaves no man at the level at which He found him, but either lifts him up nearer to God and purity and joy, or sinks him into an ever-descending pit of darkening separation from all these. A. M.

17. Another thing God will do also. He will institute a process of simple and stern *justice* toward those guilty sinners who will not have salvation in His Son. The first clause does not mean that God will apply His measuring line to justice in the abstract, but that He will measure out and award to each sinner his doom in strict justice. He will use justice for His measuring line and judgment for His plumb line. The figure of a builder is still before the mind from the verse previous. The last clause portends those visitations of Divine justice which shall tear down and sweep away the refuges of the guilty. It shall avail them nothing that they think themselves securely sheltered. What will they do when the shelter itself shall be swept away in the dreadful storm !

18, 19. God sought patiently and with assiduity long unwearied to impress a just sense of these truths upon their minds. Every other means failing, He comes at length to these appalling judgments as His last resort. H. C.

20. That in which they thought to shelter themselves proves insufficient to answer the intention : "The covering is narrower than that a man can wrap himself in it." Those that do not build upon Christ as their foundation, but rest in a righteousness of their own, will prove in the end thus to have deceived themselves ; they can never be easy, safe or warm ; the bed is too short, the covering too narrow. H.

21. Judgment is God's strange work, because His especial delight is in mercy. It is even His "strange task," because He doth not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men. *Birks.*—God, more tender than the indulgent mother, and more merciful than the pitiful judge, is willingly unwilling that any sinner should die. He punisheth no man as he is a man, but as he is a sinful man. He loves him, yet turns him over to justice. It is God's work to punish, but it is withal His "strange work,"

His strange and foreign act, not "His good will and pleasure," His nature and property being to have mercy on all men. *Spencer.*

Vengeance is one way in which God works, but it is not His usual one. The showers of mercy fall constantly, and become an ocean, while the angry and desolating storms are few; and He seems forced by our sins to send them, rather than by the promptings of His nature; and we find His reluctance to it thus expressed by His prophet: "The Lord shall rise up as in Mount Perazim, He shall be wroth as in the Valley of Gibeon, that He may do His work, His strange work, and bring to pass His act, His strange act." "In this you observe," as one has well remarked, "the work of wrath is a strange work, and the act of punishment a strange act. God strikes, but the striking might almost be declared foreign to His nature; it is necessary to the vindication of His attributes, but can hardly be said to be congenial with them. There is much in this to encourage the penitent, but not the presumptuous. God may be loth to punish, but nevertheless He will punish; and I am only impressed with a greater sense of the tremendousness of Divine wrath when I find that bringing it into act is an effort even to the Omnipotent. How weighty must that be which God Himself has difficulty in raising!" *R. T.*

23-29. This parable, which (as many of our Saviour's parables) is borrowed from the husbandman's calling, is ushered in with a solemn preface demanding attention, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear, hear and understand" (verse 23). *H.*—Men remember what they heed and regard. The wise man in the Book of Proverbs says, "Attend to my sayings; keep them in the midst of thine heart"—*i.e.*, in a place where nothing can come to take them away. The memory may be called the chest or ark of Divine truths, and we should try and carefully retain them there. *Isaiah* says, "Hearken and hear my speech." Now, hearkening denotes reverence and seriousness, as it is said, "The ears of them that hear shall hearken." Reverence, then, and seriousness in the admission of the word are helps to us in the retaining of it. Truths are lost by inattention. *T. Manton.*

These lessons drawn from the processes of agriculture are in two parts; the first (verses 24-26) represents that the husbandman does not plough and harrow all the year, forever, as his only business, and without reference to seed-sowing and harvests. On the contrary, he always has his eye on the outcome, and

shapes his ploughing to his desired results. God teaches him to do so; hence God must have wisdom sufficient to order His own processes of breaking up human hearts by discipline and judgment—processes somewhat analogous to the work of the plough and the harrow. (See *Hosea* 10:11-13.) The second part of the comparison (verses 27-29) is of the same general character. The husbandman threshes out his seed with instruments adapted to the grains in hand. The very fine seeds and stalks of the fitches and cummin (both garden vegetables used as condiments) he does not grind to atoms by driving over them his huge threshing wain. But he does use this heavy instrument in threshing his wheat [bread-corn], but he does not thresh this forever. There is a limit to the bruising which is useful for either the grain or the straw. As this huge threshing wain is often a symbol for stern and crushing afflictions, it must obviously be so applied here. God chastens in wisdom, evermore adapting His agencies to the case in hand. In the severest inflictions of His rod He goes the length of wisdom—no farther. Therefore "be ye not mockers" lest ye compel the Almighty to make your punishment indefinitely more rigorous and crushing. Remember, God seeks your reformation, and shapes His discipline to your case. Therefore do not compel Him to a degree of rigor which can be only painful to Him; only ruinous to yourself. *H. C.*

"Does the ploughman plough all day" and "break the clods" of his ground, that it may receive the seed, and does not God by His ministers break up the fallow ground? Does not the ploughman, when the ground is fitted for the seed, cast in the seed in its proper soil? He does so, and so the great God sows His word by the hand of His ministers (*Matt.* 13:19), who are to divide the word of truth, and give every one their portion. Whatever the soil of the heart is, there is some seed or other in the word proper for it. And as the word of God, so the rod of God is thus wisely made use of. Afflictions are God's threshing instruments, designed to loosen us from the world, to part between us and our chaff, and to prepare us for use. And as to these, God will make use of them as there is occasion; but He will proportion them to our strength, they shall be no heavier than there is need. If the rod and the staff will answer the end, He will not make use of His cart-wheel and His horsemen. And where these are necessary, as for the bruising of the bread-corn (which will not otherwise be got clean from the straw), yet He will not be ever

threshing it, will not always chide, but His anger shall endure but for a moment; nor will He "crush under His feet the prisoners of the earth." And herein we must acknowledge Him "wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom." H.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WOE ON JERUSALEM.

29:1 Ho Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped! add ye year to year; let the 2 feasts come round: then will I distress Ariel, and there shall be mourning and lamentation: 3 and she shall be unto me as Ariel. And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay 4 siege against thee with a fort, and I will raise siege works against thee. And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust; and thy voice shall be as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy 5 speech shall whisper out of the dust. But the multitude of thy foes shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be at an in- 6 stant suddenly. She shall be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire. 7 And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her 8 and her strong hold, and that distress her, shall be as a dream, a vision of the night. And it shall be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion.

9 Tarry ye and wonder; take your pleasure and be blind: they are drunken, but not with 10 wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes, the prophets; and your heads, the seers, 11 hath he covered. And all vision is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I can- 12 not, for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.

13 And the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw nigh unto me, and with their mouth and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me 14 is a commandment of men which hath been taught them: therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.

15 Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in 16 the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? Ye turn things upside down! Shall the potter be counted as clay; that the thing made should say of him that made it, He 17 made me not; or the thing framed say of him that framed it, He hath no understanding? Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruit- 18 ful field shall be counted for a forest? And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the 19 book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy 20 One of Israel. For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner ceaseth, and all 21 they that watch for iniquity are cut off: that make a man an offender in a cause, and lay a snare 22 for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just with a thing of nought. Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: Jacob shall not 23 now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, the

work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name ; yea, they shall sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall stand in awe of the God of Israel. They also that err in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmur shall learn doctrine.

Chapter 29.

The Woe on Jerusalem.

THE woe on Samaria, the proud crown of Ephraim, serves chiefly to introduce a message to the people and rulers of Judah, the direct objects of Isaiah's ministry. But now the message turns directly to Jerusalem. It announces the overflowing scourge of the Assyrian campaigns, and the sudden overthrow of the fierce invaders. A stern reproof of the rulers of Judah for their sensual blindness, when the judgment was so near, is followed by the promise of a great moral revolution. *Birks.*

This chapter consists of two parts, parallel to one another—*i.e.*, each containing the same series of promises and threatenings, but in different forms. The prophetic substance or material of both is that Zion should be threatened and assailed, yet not destroyed, but on the contrary strengthened and enlarged. These ideas are expressed in the second part much more fully and explicitly than in the first, which must therefore be interpreted according to what follows. In the first part, the threatening is that Zion shall be assailed by enemies and brought very low (verses 1-4). The promise is that the assailants shall be scattered like dust and chaff, vanish like a dream, and be wholly disappointed in their hostile purpose (verses 5-8). In the second part, the prophet brings distinctly into view, as causes of the threatened judgments, the spiritual intoxication and stupor of the people, their blindness to revealed truth, their hypocritical formality, and their presumptuous contempt of God (verses 9-16). The judgment itself is described as a confounding of their fancied wisdom (verse 14). The added promise is that of an entire revolution, including the destruction of the wicked, and especially of wicked rulers, the restoration of spiritual sight, joy to the meek and poor in spirit, and the final recovery of Israel from a state of alienation and disgrace to the service of Jehovah and to the saving knowledge of the truth (verses 17-24). That the second part describes not physical but spiritual evils is admitted on all hands, and indeed asserted by the prophet himself. This description is directly and repeatedly applied in the New Testament to the Jews contemporary with our Saviour. It does not follow from this that

it is a specific and exclusive prophecy respecting them ; but it does follow that it must be so interpreted as to include them, which can only be effected by regarding this last part of the chapter as descriptive of the Jews, not at one time merely, but throughout the period of the old dispensation, an assumption fully confirmed by history. The judgment threatened will then be the loss of their peculiar privileges and an exchange of state with others who had been less favored, involving an extension of the Church beyond its ancient bounds, the destruction of the old abuses, and the final restoration of the Jews themselves. If this be the meaning of the second part, it seems to determine that of the first as a figurative expression of the truth, that the Church should suffer but not perish, the imagery used for this purpose being borrowed from the actual sieges of Jerusalem. Thus understood, the chapter is prophetic of two great events, the seeming destruction of the ancient Church, and its reproduction in a new and far more glorious form, so as not only to include the Gentiles in its bounds, but also the converted remnant of God's ancient people. A.

This is the prophetic conception : Jerusalem, the city of God, standing for the capital of His spiritual kingdom on earth ; besieged violently, but rescued from ruin and her assailants scattered like chaff because she is God's altar ; yet when in the character of God's visible Church she becomes spiritually blind, bigoted and hardened, God will marvellously scourge and judicially abandon her, taking away her prerogatives and giving them to others—*i.e.*, taking them away from the blinded Jew to give them to the Gentile. For the prophecy in its application contemplates not a supposed but a real case, lifting the curtain of the future and looking directly into that marvellous change by which the kingdom of God was taken from the unfruitful Jews and given to the fruit-bearing Gentiles, in the opening of the Christian age. Such is manifestly the scope of this chapter.

1. "The city where David dwelt" is of course Jerusalem. Consequently "Ariel" means Jerusalem, but the reason why it is called Ariel has been given variously.

5. This is promise. "Thy strangers" are the foreign armies that have besieged her. They become like fine dust and like chaff

driven before the tempest—terribly significant figures to denote the ease, rapidity and entireness of their destruction. The extreme weakness of the city shows that this victory is not of her achieving, but is of God alone. H. C.

6. "Thou" is not the city. Neither the gender of the verb nor the course of thought permit this construction. It is the enemy, the "multitude of strangers" who had invested her in siege. "Visited"—*i.e.*, with the judgments of the Almighty—thunder, earthquake—a fearful group of the most terrific and destructive agencies in the material world.

7, 8. The phenomena of dreams admits in this case of a twofold application: (1) To the experience of the Jews; (2) to the experiences of their enemies. As all the scenes and excited fears of a dream may suddenly disappear when one awakes, so the Jews will be suddenly relieved as from a nightmare of horrors, by awaking some morning to find that God's tempest and fire have scattered their enemies like fine dust and chaff. Then, on the other hand, their enemies, who in their confidence of success had been dreaming of pillage and plunder, awake to find their souls no less hungry and thirsty than before. This is a phase of the phenomena of dreaming, quite distinct from the former. It supposes a man to be hungry and to dream of eating; thirsty, and to dream of drinking; yet he awakes to find that his dream is only a tantalizing delusion. So with the fond but vain hopes of the besiegers. Both of these illustrations from dreams are true to nature.

9. Here commences the second part of this chapter—the analogous description of the spiritual blindness and guilt of the people and their consequent rejection of God. The manner of presenting such truths by imperative verbs is this: Go on in your sins; you will reap what you sow. The prophet describes their sins by (apparently) commanding them to do those sins. Yet the simple thought is, *If* you will sin, you must suffer. The last part of the verse falls back to the usual form of plain description. They are spiritually drunken, morally infatuated in a sort of drunkenness which comes on men not through wine, but through the madness of sin. They stagger—*i.e.*, reel in judgment and in life, yet not through strong drink, but through the moral blindness and infatuation which sin begets. And this (verse 10 proceeds to say) is of the Lord in righteous judgment upon the people for their abuse of light enjoyed. It is the deep sleep of dead insensibility as to moral relations and duties—the eyes being shut as if utterly blind to moral

truth. "The prophets and your rulers" (better, your "heads"—*i.e.*, head-men, leaders in public sentiment) "hath He covered"—*i.e.*, as to the eyes, so that they see not the plain truths of God." Remarkably this very state of moral blindness appeared in the case of the scribes and Pharisees among whom Christ lived. They seemed utterly incapable either of just moral sentiments or of a clear intellectual view of moral truth. God had left them to moral blindness. This fact accords with and illustrates the main point of this prophecy. It is an awful fact, and should admonish sinners to beware how they resist the Holy Ghost and abuse the appeals of Divine mercy. H. C.

10. It is yet more strange that God Himself has "poured out upon them a spirit of deep sleep" and "has closed their eyes," that He who bids them awake and open their eyes should yet lay them to sleep and shut their eyes; but it is in a way of righteous judgment to punish them for their loving sleep. When God by His prophets called them, they said, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber;" and therefore He gave them up to strong delusions. This is applied to the unbelieving Jews who rejected the Gospel of Christ, and were justly hardened in their infidelity till wrath came upon them to the uttermost. And we have reason to fear it is the woful case of many who live in the midst of Gospel light. II.

11, 12. A sealed book is handed to a man who knows how to read with request that he read it, but he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed." Then it is handed (unsealed perhaps) to one who has never learned to read, and he cannot read because he does not know how. This is the sense of verse 12, where "not learned" means only, "I do not know book"—*i.e.*, do not know how to read a book. Thus the import of these verses is that in one way or another God's revelations avail the people nothing. Their moral blindness precludes the practical utility of God's revelations, just as the sealing of the book in one case and ignorance of the art of reading in the other makes this supposed book of no account.

13, 14. These statements are plain. The people are formal, hypocritical and heartless. Their fear of God is a thing of precept, not of heart; a thing taught, but not felt; taught, but not accepted and inwrought into the moral and spiritual life. Therefore God will do a very marvellous thing; He will let the wisdom of their wise men perish. Moral blindness will hide the light of moral truth from their eyes. Our Lord cites this passage (Matt. 15:7-9) as

applying fitly to the perversions of the law by the Pharisees through their traditions. This was perverting—*i.e.*, wresting and distorting the very substance as well as the letter of the law. In the days of Isaiah men may have held the truth unchanged as to its form of expression, yet blunted and made morally inoperative through their perverseness. The prophecy may be fulfilled in either way. Probably our Lord quotes this passage in full accordance with its original meaning. Isaiah's prophetic eye is on that period of national blindness and infatuation in which the people rejected their own Messiah, and so plucked down ruin upon their city and nation. H. C.

It is a spiritual judgment with which God threatens to punish them for their spiritual wickedness. They did one strange thing, they removed all sincerity from their hearts; now God will go on and do another, He will remove all sagacity from their heads; "the wisdom of their wise men shall perish." They played the hypocrite, and thought to put a cheat upon God, and now they are left to themselves to play the fool; and not only to put a cheat upon themselves, but to be easily cheated by all about them. Those that make religion no more than a pretence, to serve a turn, are out in their politics; and it is just with God to deprive those of their understanding who part with their uprightness. II.

15. This is a further description of the people or their leaders, as not only wise in their own conceit, but as impiously hoping to deceive God or elude His notice. The absurdity of such an expectation is exposed in the following verse. In the last clause of this the interrogative form implies negation. A.

16. The prophet compares the moral perverseness of men who think their plans too deep for God to comprehend, to the absurdity of the notion that the potter is only *as* his clay, or to the impudence that would be manifested if anything made could and should say to the maker of it, "He never made me!" or if anything produced should say as to him that produced it, "He knows nothing!" H. C.

17. The only natural interpretation of the verse is that which regards it as prophetic of a mutual change of condition, the first becoming last and the last first. If, as we have seen sufficient reason to believe, the previous context has respect to the Jews under the old dispensation, nothing can be more appropriate or natural than to understand the verse before as foretelling the excision of the unbelieving Jews and the admission of the Gentiles to the Church.

A.—The forests of ages, the Lebanon of this figure, represent the Gentile nations, long shut off from moral culture, and bearing no fruit unto God. But they become the fruit-bearing fields—the Carmel of Gospel times! Over against this, the old fruit-bearing fields—the Jewish people—go back by reason of their unbelief to the state of a forest, under no moral culture and yielding no Gospel fruit. As our Lord often expressed it: "Many that are first shall be last and the last shall be first" (Matt. 19:30). "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43).

18, 19. The expressions here allude to verses 11, 12, and aim to put in antithesis the moral blindness of the Jews as predicted there, and the docility and consequent joy in God and in His Gospel among the Gentile converts. The history of the Acts of the Apostles is a striking comment on these verses. Men long deaf to God's words now hear with open ears. The eyes of men long sitting in darkness now look forth from that darkness and see a glorious light. "And there is great joy in that city" (Acts 8:8) among those converts from Gentile nations.

20, 21. The general sense of these verses is that the Gospel, going abroad among the Gentile nations, bore with it reform in morals and in the civil and common life of men. This was indeed the glory of Christianity. It moulded society; became a mightily transforming power in courts of justice, in the defence of human rights, in promoting peace, good order, and the general welfare of society. H. C.

23. The emphatic mention of the Holy One of Jacob and the God of Israel, as the object to be sanctified, implies a relation still existing between all believers and their spiritual ancestry, as well as a relation of identity between the Jewish and the Christian Church.

24. If the foregoing verse predicts the reception of the Gentiles into the family of Israel, and if this reception, as we learn from the New Testament, was connected with the disinheriting of most of the natural descendants, who are nevertheless to be restored hereafter, then the promise of this final restoration is a stroke still wanting to complete the fine prophetic picture now before us. That finishing stroke is given in this closing verse, which adds to the promise that the Gentiles shall become the heirs of Israel, another that the heirs of Israel according to the flesh shall themselves be restored to their long-lost heritage, not by excluding their successors in their turn, but by peaceful and brotherly participation with them. A.

The grand, all-regenerating force is already entered into the world, and is working steadily on through all retrocessions and advances alike. Lift up your heads, O ye drooping ones ! Christ is in the world ! Jesus, Son of God, and word of God's eternity—He is about us, within us, going through all things, moving onward in all. Leaven does not make a noise when it works, and yet it works ! And so the Gospel works, the progress goes on, a grand, mighty progress, and there is really no retrocession. No river runs to the sea more certainly or steadily than the great salvation for man runs to conquest and a kingdom. *Bushnell.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTERS XXX., XXXI.

WOE AGAINST THE EGYPTIAN PARTY IN JUDAH.

- 30:1** Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me ; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin : that walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth ; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt ! Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. For his princes are at Zoan, and his ambassadors are come to Hanes. They shall all be ashamed of a people that cannot profit them, that are not an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach.
- 6** The burden of the beasts of the South.
- Through the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the lioness and the lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people that shall not profit *them*. For Egypt helpeth in vain, and to no purpose : there have I called her Rahab that sitteth still. Now go, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever. For it is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD : which say to the seers, See not ; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits : get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.
- Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon ; therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. And he shall break it as a potter's vessel is broken, breaking it in pieces without sparing ; so that there shall not be found among the pieces thereof a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the cistern. For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved ; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength : and ye would not. But ye said, No, for we will flee upon horses ; therefore shall ye flee : and, We will ride upon the swift ; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift. One thousand *shall flee* at the rebuke of one ; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee : till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill. And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you : for the LORD is a God of judgement ; blessed are all they that wait for him.
- 19** For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem : thou shalt weep no more ; he will surely be gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry ; when he shall hear, he will answer thee. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be hidden any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers : and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it ; when ye turn to the right hand,

22 and when ye turn to the left. And ye shall defile the overlaying of thy graven images of silver, and the plating of thy molten images of gold : thou shalt cast them away as an unclean thing ; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence. And he shall give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal ; and bread of the increase of the ground, and it shall be fat and plenteous : in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures. The oxen likewise and the young asses that till the ground shall eat savoury provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan. And there shall be upon every lofty mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters, in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the hurt of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

27 Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far, burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke : his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue is as a devouring fire : and his breath is as an overflowing stream, that reacheth even unto the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity : and a bridle that causeth to err *shall be* in the jaws of the peoples. Ye shall have a song as in the night when a holy feast is kept ; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel. And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of *his* anger, and the flame of a devouring fire, with a blast, and tempest, and hailstones. For through the voice of the LORD shall the Assyrian be broken in pieces, which smote with a rod. And every stroke of the appointed staff, which the LORD shall lay upon him, shall be with tabrets and harps : and in battles of shaking will he fight with them.

33 For a Topheth is prepared of old ; yea, for the king it is made ready ; he hath made it deep and large : the pile thereof is fire and much wood ; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

31 : 1 Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses ; and trust in chariots, because they are many, and in horsemen, because they are very strong ; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD ! Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words : but will arise against the house of the evil-doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity. Now the Egyptians are men, and not God ; and their horses flesh, and not spirit : and when the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall stumble, and he that is holpen shall fall, and they all shall fail together.

4 For thus saith the LORD unto me, Like as when the lion growleth and the young lion over his prey, if a multitude of shepherds be called forth against him, he will not be dismayed at their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them : so shall the LORD of hosts come down to fight upon mount Zion, and upon the hill thereof. As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts protect Jerusalem ; he will protect and deliver *it*, he will pass over and preserve *it*. Turn ye unto him from whom ye have deeply revolted, O children of Israel. For in that day they shall cast away every man his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin. Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of man ; and the sword, not of men, shall devour him : and he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall become tributary. And his rock shall pass away by reason of terror, and his princes shall be dismayed at the ensign, saith the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.

Chap. 30. This chapter contains an exposure of the sin and folly of ancient Israel in seeking foreign aid against their enemies, to the neglect of God, their rightful sovereign and their only strong protector. The costume of the prophecy is borrowed from the circumstances and events of Isaiah's own times. Thus Egypt is mentioned in the first part of the chapter as the chosen ally of the people, and Assyria in the last part as the dreaded enemy.

There is no need, however, of restricting what is said to that period exclusively. The presumption, as in all such cases, is that the description was designed to be more general, although it may contain allusions to particular emergencies. Reliance upon human aid, involving a distrust of the Divine promises, was a crying sin of the ancient Church, not at one time only, but throughout her history. To denounce such sins and threaten them with condign pun-

ishment was no small part of the prophetic office. A.

This chapter opens with rebuke of the Jews for seeking help from Egypt against Assyria, accounting it rebellion against God and declaring that it should avail them nothing (verses 1-7); and closes with predictions of the overthrow of the Assyrians by the high hand of Jehovah Himself (verses 27-33). The connection between these extremes of the chapter is made by dwelling at some length upon the sins of the people, from which their seeking help from Egypt was a natural outgrowth (verses 8-17), and then turning in Divine mercy to great promises of spiritual renovation, followed legitimately with promises of temporal deliverance from their enemies, from which the prophet passes to the special case of Assyria as happily illustrating the general principle of help from God to His believing people in their need (verses 18-26). It is more than legitimate to give the doctrines of this chapter a universal application to the sin of seeking help from man and to the duty of seeking help from God, for it was plainly the Divine purpose to illustrate and impress these general principles—practically good for every age—rather than merely to give the world certain facts of Jewish history in respect to their relations to Egypt and Assyria. What is said here of God's visitations of judgment upon wicked nations has an air of grandeur and magnificence rarely equalled by any other writer and rarely surpassed by Isaiah.

1, 2. The Lord does not say, "*My children*," for they had practically disowned this relation by their rebellion against His authority. They were active and earnest in taking counsel, but not of God; in framing profound plans, but not in sympathy with God's Spirit. They were bent on making a league with Egypt against Assyria. So doing, they would add to the sin of heart apostasy from God the farther sin of a foreign alliance which would be at once insulting to God and ensnaring to themselves. No step of such importance should under any circumstance be taken without first seeking counsel from God. But in this case the people knew they were going against His revealed will. Egypt is more precisely seeking shelter *under* her shadow, in the shade of her protection.

4. Manifestly these princes and ambassadors are those of the Jews, now seen in Egypt, to carry into effect the schemes of their king and his counsellors in a league with the king of Egypt. "*Zoan*" is referred to (19:11) as the

residence of the king and his court. It was a very ancient city (Num. 13:22) and one of national importance (Ps. 78:43).

6. The prophet sees and describes the caravan of Jewish ambassadors as they cross the Arabian desert on their way to Egypt, bearing ample presents to ingratiate the good will of Egypt's king. Lo! see the burden of those beasts going south, through a land of trouble and discomfort (to all travellers) whence come the lion and the lioness (Heb.), etc. H. C.

7. The historical chapters of Isaiah, especially chaps. 36 and 37, show that Hezekiah received no help at all from the subordinate Pharaoh, who was probably Shabatok, and that though Tirhakah did move on his behalf (37:9), yet that he neither engaged the forces of Sennacherib nor seriously troubled him. The relief of Hezekiah and the relief of Egypt itself—whose subjection to Assyria was thereby deferred for a generation—came from another quarter. When Hezekiah gave up his trust in any arm of flesh and made his appeal to God, spreading before Him the blasphemous letter of Sennacherib, then Isaiah was commissioned to assure him of a miraculous deliverance (37:36). The deliverance itself and its marvellous character was acknowledged by the Egyptians no less than by the Israelites. G. R.

The Jewish party, which sought for an alliance with Egypt, was pursuing a policy which on human as well as on Divine grounds was utterly fatal. The party was in high favor in the time of Hezekiah; it seemed to advocate the only line of policy by which the independence of the Jewish state could be secured, and Isaiah's opposition and words of warning were disregarded. But events showed that he was right. The alliance with Egypt, which had been purchased with the treasures of Jerusalem, and the toilsome journey of the Jewish ambassadors into the heart of Ethiopia was shattered by the battle of Eltekeh, while the overthrow of the army of Sennacherib before Jerusalem proved that trust in their God was the only defence the rulers of Judah needed, and that their strength was, as Isaiah, had declared, "*to sit still*." From that time onward, to the death of Hezekiah, there was no more straining after an Egyptian alliance, and Isaiah's later years were cheered by the consciousness that the policy he had preached and struggled for was at last triumphant. For nearly a century Egypt disappeared from the political horizon of the Jews. *Sayce*.

8, 9. What needed so lasting a record was rather the engrained perverseness of the people,

out of which all their acts of sin arose, than the details of this Egyptian embassy. Its failure was rather a lesson for the moment; but the perverseness of the Jewish people in despising God's word and rejecting His prophets was a weighty and solemn lesson for every age. They continually urged the prophets to give answers that would encourage them in their worldly schemes instead of reporting truly the messages of God. *Birks.*

10. *Smooth things or words* is a common figurative term for flatteries. Luther's expressive version is, *preach soft to us.* A.

10, 11. So deeply infatuated in sin were this people that they even sought to seduce the Lord's prophets, exhorting them (so the Hebrew states and repeats it) not to *see* the truth for them, but to speak to them only smooth and delusive words. They chose pleasing lies rather than unwelcome truth. They could not bear to be annoyed in their sinful pursuits and pleasures, and were therefore ready to grasp the good of sinning recklessly and risk all the bad consequences! "Get ye out of the way" does not mean precisely get out of *our* way so that we may have a clear field for sinning with no obstructions; but this: Turn ye out of the *right* way; do not hesitate to turn aside never so much from the path of duty and right; run the risks of disobeying God even as we have resolved to do. Dare to sin on at all hazards and fear nothing! And especially bring before us no more "The Holy One of Israel." H. C.

Here are some so much in love with their own ruin as to own plainly and roundly what they would be at; "Prophecy not unto us," they say, "*right* things, but *smooth* things." As if they had said, "Do but oil the razor for us, and let us alone to cut our own throats." *South.*—It is not pleasant to tell people what they don't want to hear. It is a great deal nicer to prophecy smooth things than to cry, "Repent or perish." And there are a great many beautiful things in the Bible. The preacher can if he will find texts to last a lifetime that will not offend the most fastidious. He can be Sabbath after Sabbath and year after year "as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." No wonder that many yield to this temptation, and that ever and anon there is a new theology to meet the demand of those to whom the cross is an offence. But some one may ask, If we are to preach a gospel that offends men how are we going to save them? The answer is, we don't expect to save them.

No preacher ever was or ever will be so attractive as to be able in and of himself to draw one sinner to Christ. It is "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." *Interior.*

In dealing with ourselves or with one another, if we aim at deep work or thorough results we must go bravely and honestly at this mark. Pre-eminently it is the prophet's business. Men in earnest will not shrink from the awful office—stern, searching, incisive, painful, and therefore very often unwelcome, but merciful with the far-sighted mercy which regards the true peace beyond the transient pain. F. D. H.

15. These titles of God have here a special force. Their resorting to Egypt for help was a direct affront to the unchangeable Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel. It was a denial of every lesson taught by the plagues of Egypt, the passover and Exodus, when that name was more fully revealed. Distrust of God had caused a feverish restlessness. Their punishment would resemble their sin. By rejecting the prophet's warning they virtually claimed to be wiser than God, and they would now be filled with their own devices. *Birks.*

In returning to Me and in resting upon Me ye shall have salvation; in quietness as opposed to agitation and anxiety; in confidence as opposed to distrust and unbelief, shall be your strength—said with an eye to their national danger from the Assyrians when they were disowning God and looking to Egypt instead. The sentiments are good for all circumstances of human want and trial. God would have His teaching in this case apply to every possible case which involves like principles. H. C.

Would we be saved from the evil of every calamity, guarded against the temptation of it, and secured from the curse of it, which are the only evil things in it? It must be in returning and rest; in returning to God and reposing in Him as our rest. In returning, in the thorough reformation of your hearts and lives; and in rest, in an entire submission of your souls to God, and a complacency in Him, "you shall be saved." Would we be strengthened to do what is required of us and to bear what is laid upon us? It must be in quietness and in confidence; we must keep our spirits calm and sedate by a continual dependence upon God and His power and goodness; we must retire into ourselves with a holy quietness, suppressing all turbulent and tumultuous passions, and keeping the peace in our own minds. And we must rely upon God with a holy confidence

that He can do what He will, and will do what is best for His people. And this will be our strength; it will inspire us with such a holy fortitude as will carry us with ease and courage through all the difficulties we may meet with. H.

More progress is to be made by waiting than by working; there may be a greater power in silent, patient looking for than in the restless exertion of all the forces of the mind and of the body. It was Israel that so frequently, against God's will, in the pressure of the moment said, "We will flee upon horses, we will ride upon the swift" (verse 16); and the path they had chosen in self-will as conducting to sure victory led to destruction. Have we also something of that rash temper which prefers to cut the knot of difficulty rather than wait till the time comes, when higher wisdom shall unravel it? Then stands before us, as inscribed in capitals, this passage, "*In quietness and in confidence shall be your rest.*" It is not stated that this way to real strength and rest is the most easy, a smooth path for all feet. To wait is often harder than to work; drudgery not seldom easier than doing nothing, except when carried beyond all bounds. And yet this last, most difficult requirement is in a thousand circumstances that which is asked of us; and at every turn God shows us that the strength born of still trust is not alone our highest, but, in fine, our only power. *Van O.*—Much of Christian duty is not active, bustling work, but quiet, patient waiting. There come many times in the experience of every life when victory can be gained in no other way. We must stand still and wait for God. Immeasurable harm is wrought in personal lives and in the work of God by the impatience that cannot wait for the Divine bidding to go forward. J. R. M.

An active social life, with its sympathies, its friendships and its close contact of mind with mind, interspersed with hours of solitude for quiet thought and serious meditation, seems to be the Divine order for man's best growth. We acquire most rapidly in society; we ripen best in solitude. We receive new ideas, devise new plans, welcome new impulses most readily when under the influence of other minds; we mature all these and render them effective in our lives in the quiet meditation of the still hour. There is therefore a sense in which we ought to be never less alone than when alone. And in view of this truth, we should learn to be company for ourselves, and good company, too. S. S. T.—Solitude is no word for a

true, God-loving heart. We are least alone when we are most alone, for then, if we are His, we may most fully realize His presence. So if any of you are disposed sometimes to say the road is dark and long and rough, and I have to tread it unaccompanied, "set the Lord always before" you, and, with Him at your "right hand," He and you will be—I was going to say, enough for one another, and, at any rate, will be too many for all opposition. "I was left alone, and I saw this great vision." I was left alone, and God came to keep me company. That may be the experience of every soul. . . . The secret of a quiet heart—which is a very different thing from a stagnant one—is to keep ever near God. Leaning upon Him, we shall not be shaken as we otherwise would, and shall be masters of ourselves; and if we are masters of ourselves nothing outside of us will much move us. "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." In everything, by prayer and thanksgiving, make God present to yourselves, and yourselves present to God, and "the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds." A. M.

Peace comes swiftest when you seek it as an end least. Seek purity, seek renewal of heart and life, seek harmony with God, seek the society of Christ as a Saviour and Intercessor for you, and peace, in God's good time, will come of itself. How many really earnest souls of us are spoiling our work because we will invert God's order, and instead of seeking faith supremely, leaving comfort for an incident, go about to get comfort first, and thus miss faith and comfort both! Let us be patient. Stillness is our needed sacrifice. Baffled and broken the soul must often be before its immortal strength comes. Humiliation of pride, an utter consciousness of infirmity, to be kept painfully out of our inheritance, fasting and mortified ambition, forty days in the wilderness, three years in Arabia—all these are the price of conquest. Do not pray for exemption from them, but for victory by them. F. D. H.

Must life be a failure for one compelled to stand still in enforced inaction and see the great throbbing tides of life go by? No; victory is then to be gotten by standing still, by quiet waiting. It is a thousand times harder to do this than it was in the active days to rush on in the columns of stirring life. It requires a grander heroism to stand and wait and not lose heart and hope, to submit to the will of God, to give up work and honors to others, to be quiet, confident and rejoicing, while the happy, busy multitude goes on and away. It is the

grandest life "having done all, to stand." J. R. M.

17. The thought seems to be, Ye shall flee in all directions till two are nowhere left together. Ye may be seen winding your way over the distant hill-tops, or standing there in dismay; but every man *alone*, so utter is your dispersion and so completely is your military power broken. The threatening of calamity closes here; indeed how could it farther go? The people are utterly broken down. Hence this extremity becomes God's opportunity for signal mercy; as we shall see. H. C.

18-26. These verses refer to the Assyrian deliverance. The connection is direct and forcible. However severe God's discipline, its design was gracious. His dealings are full of wisdom. There is, on His part, no slackness or indifference, but the calm waiting of an ever-patient love. Even in the hour of judgment God will be exalted, not to crush His people with the terrors of His majesty, but only "that He may have mercy" upon them. He knows how to temper their afflictions, that they may yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Since He waits in patient love, to show them favor at the last, they also are bound to wait, in faith and patience, until the blessing shall come. *Birks.*—He waits that He may be gracious. Goodness sets God upon the exercise of patience, and patience sets many a sinner on running into the arms of mercy. That mercy which makes God ready to embrace returning sinners makes Him willing to bear with them in their sins, and wait their return. *Charnock.*

20. The restored and forgiven people are not placed instantly in the height of prosperity. As in the case of those who returned from captivity in Babylon, serious hardships were the first lessons; but God gave them a precious faith and a rich renewal of Divine light, instruction and consequent spiritual comfort. Such is the course of thought here. We may expect some straitness for earthly bread; but ye shall have an abundance of the bread of Divine light, the bread of heaven. Thy teachers shall not hide themselves away in corners any more, as men driven from their homes by persecution; but thine eyes shall see them at all points present and ready to teach thee the word and will of God. H. C.

21. This idea of a road as the highway of God's kingdom shows itself all along in the Bible record. Again and again, fidelity to God's service is spoken of as continuing in "the way which the Lord thy God command-

ed thee to walk in." (See, for example, De. 18:5; 31:29; Judges 2:22; 2 K. 21:22; Jer. 5:4, 5.) And because there are roads which are not the king's highway, frequent mention is made in the Bible of ways of evil, as well as ways of good—roads within the kingdom which are not roads of the kingdom. "Thus saith the Lord, Behold I set before you the way of life, and the way of death" (Jer. 21:8). And this view of the possibility of being out of the way while in a way, gives added force to the cry of the psalmist: "Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path" (Ps. 27:11). It also gives added preciousness to the Lord's assurance to those who trust in Him: "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." H. C. T.

23-26. In this passage some expressions are manifestly figurative. But whatever doubt may rest on any clause as between the literal and the figurative sense, of this we may be sure: it testifies to the loving-kindness of God—always the main and vital thing.

25, 26. Rivers and streams run usually in valleys and not on the hill or mountain tops. Hence the thing affirmed of them here must denote very rich blessings; as, on the other hand, great slaughter and falling towers indicate fearful calamities. The same sense is given under other figures in the next verse. In the day when God bindeth up the breach of His people, the augmentation of light from the heavenly bodies shall be great, even sevenfold and more. The light of seven days compressed into one; the light of the moon becoming as that of the sun; these are magnificent figures and must be freighted with a wealth of precious significance. It has been fitly said that these must be figures, for the literal fulfilment would be a calamity and not a blessing. These mortal eyes could not bear such outbursting, dazzling, perpetual effulgence. But Zion's spiritual light can never be in excess. H. C.

27-34. The fall of the Assyrian is here foretold in words most impressive and sublime. They strongly confirm the view of Vitringa, that a violent thunderstorm was the chief agency by which the commission of the destroying angel was fulfilled. *Birks.*—Verse 31 makes it certain that this entire passage has a somewhat special reference to the destruction of Sennacherib's army. Yet this case is referred to here, in part at least, as an illustration of the general law of Divine interposition for the deliverance of His prayerful, trusting peo-

ple. What God did for Hezekiah and his people He will do in like circumstances for any and every other generation of His chosen. The "name of the Lord" means His manifestations, God Himself as seen in the special revealings of His glory. The whole description is grand, not to say awful. Jehovah, awakening the energies of His being to intense activity, is seen coming from afar, burning with anger (speaking after the manner of men), and heavy are the columns of rising smoke (the probable sense of the Hebrew); His lips full of indignation; His tongue like a devouring fire; who could stand before such consuming wrath? He comes forth to lay low in death that great Assyrian host. All the agencies of fire, coupled with accumulated declarations of burning wrath, set forth His earnest zeal in this work and the fearfulness of His manifestations to effect it. H. C.

29. The night may be particularly mentioned in the first clause, either because all the Mosaic festivals began in the evening, or with special allusion to the passover, which is described in the law (Ex. 12:42) as "a night to be much observed unto the Lord, as that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations." This verse gives an interesting glimpse of ancient usage as to the visitation of the Temple at the greater yearly festivals. The *Rock of Israel* is not Mount Zion or Moriah, but Jehovah Himself, to whose presence they resorted, as appears from 2 Sam. 23:3. A.

30, 31. While His people make their voice heard in songs of praise to God, He makes His voice heard in thunder and the flash of His arms seen in lightning for the overwhelming of His foes. In this verse again the prophet groups boldly and almost rudely together all the grand agencies of lightning and fire, tempest and storm. Before such an inundation of agencies for destruction, the Assyrian is beaten down—falling never to rise.

33. This allusion to Tophet is the earliest which appears in the Scriptures. Additional particulars appear in the history of Josiah's reformation (2 K. 23:10; Jer. 7:31 and 19:6, 11-14). The prophet here represents Tophet as a place prepared for the burning of the Assyrian king. Made deep and large, with fire and wood in abundance, prepared for the king, and of course, he being thrown upon it, the breath of the Lord kindles it into its fearful conflagration. This is, of course, a figurative description, Tophet being made the central point in the figure because it was a well-known place

for the burning of dead bodies, and also of all manner of filth from the city, Jerusalem. H. C.

The whole picture is a most solemn warning of judgments to alight hereafter on the open enemies of the true Church of God. *Birks.*

Chap. 31. The scope of thought in this short chapter resembles that in chap. 30, save that it omits the detailed account of the sins of Judah which appears in chap. 30:8-17. This begins with a woe on those who go to Egypt for help; declares this help to be weakness, on which moreover God will bring ruin; but He will Himself deliver His own people. This chapter closes like the one before with the illustrative case of His destroying the Assyrian power. H. C.

Reliance upon Egypt is distrust of God, who will avenge Himself by destroying both the helper and the helped (verses 1-3). His determination and ability to save those who confide in His protection are expressed by two comparisons (verses 4, 5). The people are therefore invited to return to Him, from every false dependence, human or idolatrous, as they will be constrained to do with shame, when they shall witness the destruction of their enemies by the resistless fire of His wrath (verses 6-9).

2. God was as wise as the Egyptians, and ought therefore to have been consulted; He was as wise as the Jews, and could therefore thwart their boasted policy.

3. This verse repeats the contrast between human and Divine aid, and the threatening that the unbelievers and their foreign helpers should be involved in the same destruction. The antithesis of *flesh* and *spirit*, like that of *God* and *man*, is not metaphysical, but rhetorical, and is intended simply to express extreme dissimilitude or inequality. Reliance upon Egypt is again sarcastically represented as reliance upon horses, and as such opposed to confidence in God. As Egypt here means the Egyptians, it is afterward referred to as a plural. *Stumble* and *fall* are here poetical equivalents. A.

As it is good for men to "know themselves to be but men" (Ps. 9:20), so it is good for us to consider that those we love and trust to are but men. They therefore can do nothing without God, nothing against Him, nothing in comparison with Him. They are men, and therefore fickle and foolish, mutable and mortal, here to-day and gone to-morrow; they are men, and therefore let us not make gods of them, by making them our hope and confidence, and expecting that in them which is to

be found in God only ; they are not God, they cannot do that for us which God can do, and will, if we trust in Him. Let us not then neglect Him to seek to them ; let us not forsake the rock of ages for broken reeds, nor the fountain of living waters for broken cisterns. H.

5. These "flying birds," being feminine, are the mother birds hovering round their young to protect them. As such flying birds do, so will the Lord defend His nestlings, however weak they may be in themselves. Our Saviour has nearly the same figure, "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens" (Matt. 23 : 37). "*Passing over*" is the word made sacred in Hebrew history and literature on that eventful night when Egypt's first-born fell, but the destroyer "*passed over*" the thresholds on which the blood of sprinkling had fallen. So under the shield of atoning blood and Divine mercy Israel is now safe. God will pass over her in a sense analogous to that ancient passing over. H. C.

7. Trust in idols and reliance upon human

helpers are here, and often elsewhere, put together, as identical in principle, and closely connected in the experience of ancient Israel. A.

8, 9. All the main features of the coming judgment are here given. The enemies would be overthrown by the sword of no mighty captain or numerous army, but by the direct visitation of the Lord of hosts. Their king would seek his safety by inglorious flight. The survivors, panic-struck and dismayed, would many of them be made captive ; and those become a spoil and prey to others, who exacted tribute before. The crestfallen monarch would not pause in his flight till he reached Nineveh, his stronghold, "the dwelling-place of the lions, and the feeding-place of the young lions" (Nah. 2 : 11). His princes would also be terrified at the display of God's mighty power. Jerusalem would prove to be indeed an Ariel, a fire-place of God, where His presence would be like a fiery furnace, to consume and destroy the mighty oppressors of His people, and put out their name for ever and ever. *Birks.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXXII.

32 : 1 BEHOLD, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgement.
2 And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest ; as
3 rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. And the eyes
4 of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart
also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready
5 to speak plainly. The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be
6 bountiful. For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise profaneness, and to utter error against the Lord, to make empty the soul of the hungry,
7 and to cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. The instruments also of the churl are evil : he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the meek with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right. But the liberal deviseth liberal things ; and in liberal things shall he continue.

9 Rise up, ye women that are at ease, and hear my voice ; ye careless daughters, give ear
10 unto my speech. For days beyond a year shall ye be troubled, ye careless women : for the
11 vintage shall fail, the ingathering shall not come. Tremble, ye women that are at ease ; be troubled, ye careless ones : strip you, and make you bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins.
12, 13 They shall smite upon the breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers ; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the
14 joyous city : for the palace shall be forsaken ; the populous city shall be deserted ; the hill
15 and the watch-tower shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks ; until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field, and
16 the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgement shall dwell in the wilderness, and

17 righteousness shall abide in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace ;
 18 and the effect of righteousness quietness and confidence for ever. And my people shall abide
 19 in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places. But it shall hail,
 20 in the downfall of the forest ; and the city shall be utterly laid low. Blessed are ye that sow
 beside all waters, that send forth the feet of the ox and the ass.

Chap. 32. In this chapter the first eight verses constitute one distinct portion ; the remaining twelve verses another. In the first part a new state of things appears, morally and politically—a king reigning for the ends of righteousness ; the moral perceptions of the people quickened and corrected ; their sentiments also brought back to truth and righteousness. The choice of construction lies between the theory of a general statement with no special, exclusive reference to any one king, and the theory of a primary reference to Hezekiah and a secondary one to the Messiah—the former in his character as a great moral reformer being considered as a sort of representative of the latter. I incline to this last-mentioned view. The second part (verses 9–20) makes a special call to the careless women of Jerusalem ; predicts grievous calamities which shall continue until a precious effusion of God's spirit shall bring the people back to God and righteousness. Then prosperity shall ensue.

1. The scenes now before the prophet stand in close relation with the recent past. The king and people have ceased to trust in Egypt ; the blindness and unbelief which turned their eye of hope from God to Egypt have passed away, and better moral vision has taken its place ; Divine judgments have been sanctified to the people ; and not least, the signal overthrow of the Assyrian host has made solemn impressions of the power, the faithfulness and the loving care of God for His Zion. Now the good Hezekiah appears, ruling for the interests and ends of righteousness and calling the people back to the pure worship of their God. Hence this new scene has in its foreground the good Hezekiah and shows how he reigns—viz., for the purpose of promoting intrinsic righteousness ; a righteous heart and life as toward both their fellow-men and their God. The recent history of the nation and the points brought forward in the three next preceding chapters accord well with the interpretation which applies this verse primarily to Hezekiah. This general accord becomes an argument at once legitimate and strong for its reference in its primary sense to him.

2. In its primary sense this must mean, Behold, how one good man may become a great

moral power for the protection of the wronged and for the comfort and happiness of a whole people. The figures to represent this are plain as well as beautiful ; a shelter from fierce wind ; a covert from storm ; or like rivers over a dry desert ; or the shadow of a great rock in a land where men become weary with toil, heat and thirst, and find no shade of leaf or dell—naught but a great rock to cast a shadow for their shelter from the sun. These are lively emblems of the rich, exhaustless blessings that have come to our lost race through the one great man Jesus, in whom the Divine Messiah became incarnate. How distinctly the prophet had this in view it may not be possible for us to determine. The fulness and wealth of his figures seem to favor this reference, and yet more does the allusion (verse 15) to the “ pouring out of the spirit ” as the special agent and cause of this great moral renovation and its consequent fruits of righteousness and peace. H. C.

2. Not more beautiful and suggestive than logical are the thoughts as the spirit of inspiration has given them utterance. “ And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest ; as rivers of water in a dry place ; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” Refuge, refreshment, repose, or deliverance, life, peace, is the order of the spirit. Christ, the Divine Man, is the peace or repose of the believing soul. *Birks.*—In these words, so full of encouragement and hope, the prophet seems again to point to the coming of Christ—the theme which was the undertone of his entire prophecy. Although he may have had a primary reference to the good king Hezekiah, in whose reign justice, peace and the reviving of pure religion succeeded the oppression, turbulence and idolatry of the reign of Ahaz, yet the full glory of the restoration here depicted could be realized only under the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah. How perfect the sense of rest, security and refreshment indicated in these promises ! The images are all borrowed from the climate of Palestine, where the traveller may be suddenly overtaken by a scorching wind or a violent tempest, or find himself under the blaze of noon, remote from water or shade. How welcome the sight

of a shelter, the sound of a gurgling brook, even the shadow of a rock in which one may rest till the heat is over! Christ is that covert of defence, that fountain of refreshment, that rock of shelter and shade. In Him we find refuge from calamity, solace for grief and loss, supply for inward want, rest from care. And while He gives to us personally this spiritual rest and comfort, the working of His principles tends to a condition of outward peace and safety. Therefore should we sow in hope, and wait for His blessed appearing. J. P. T.

The only reference of these words which gives full weight to their wealth of blessing is to regard them as a prophecy of *the man*—Christ Jesus; hiding in whom we are safe, “coming” to whom we “never thirst,” guarded and blessed by whom no weariness can befall us, and dwelling in whom this weary world shall be full of refreshment and peace! I do not need to point out the exquisite beauty of the imagery or the pathos and peace that breathe in the majestic rhythm of the words. There is something more than poetical beauty or rhetorical amplification of a single thought in those three clauses. The “hiding-place” and “covert” refer to one class of wants; the “river of water in a dry place” to yet another; and “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” to yet a third. And though they be tinged and dyed in Eastern imagery, the realities of life in Western lands and in all ages give them a deeper beauty than that of lovely imagery, and are the best keys to understanding their meaning. The three classes of promises have correlative with them three phases of man’s condition, three diverse aspects of his need and misery. The “covert” and the “hiding-place” imply tempest and storm and danger; the “river of water” implies drought and thirst; “the shadow of a great rock” implies lassitude and languor, fatigue and weariness. The view of life that arises from the combination of all three bears upon its front the signature of truth in the very fact that it is a sad view. For notwithstanding all that we may say concerning the beauty and the blessedness scattered broadcast round about us, notwithstanding that we believe, and hold as for our lives the “happy faith that all which we behold is full of blessing,” it needs but a very short experience of this life, and but a superficial examination of our own histories and our own hearts, in order to come to the conclusion that the world is full of strange and terrible sadness, that every life has dark tracts and long stretches of sombre

tint, and that no representation is true to fact which dips its pencil only in light and flings no shadow on the canvas. There is no depth in a Chinese picture because there is no shade. It is the wrinkles and marks of tear and wear that make the expression in a *man’s* portrait. “Life’s sternest painter is the best.” The gloomy thoughts which are charged against Scripture are the true thoughts about man, and the world as man has made it. Not, indeed, that life needs to be so, but that by reason of our own evil and departure from God there have come in as a disturbing element the retributive consequences of our own godlessness, and these have made danger where else were safety, thirst where else were rivers of water, and weariness and lassitude where else were strength and bounding hope! But there *is* a man, our brother, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, who can be to single souls the adequate object of their perfect trust, the abiding home of their deepest love, the unfailing supply for their profoundest wants. There *is* one man, whom it is wise and blessed to look to as the exclusive source of all our peace, the absolute Ruler of all our lives. There *is* a man in whom we find all that we have vainly sought in men. There *is* a man who can be to all ages and to the whole race their refuge, their satisfaction, their rest. “It behooved Him to be made in all points like unto His brethren,” that His succor might be ever near and His sympathy sure. The man Christ Jesus, who, being man, is God manifest in the flesh, exercises in one and the same act the offices of Divine pity and human compassion, of Divine and human guardianship, of Divine and human love.

“And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought.”

The dreams of weary hearts that have longed for an impossible perfection are all below the reality. The fact surpasses all expectation. It is more than all prophecies, it is more than all hopes, it is more than all praise. It is God’s unspeakable gift. Well might an angel voice proclaim the mystery of love, “Unto you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” The ancient promise of our text is a history now. A man has been and is all these things for us. A. M.

3, 4. The main feature of these promises is the perfecting of faculties, previously defective and imperfect. Eyes that were dim shall see clearly, listless ears shall hearken, the rash

and hasty become thoughtful, and understand knowledge; and tongues that stammered before shall utter clearly the praises of God.

Birks.

4. It seems more natural to understand the bodily defects here mentioned as denoting others of an intellectual and spiritual nature, neglect and ignorance of spiritual matters. The minds of men shall begin to be directed to religious truth, and delivered from ignorance and error in relation to it.

5. When men's eyes are thus opened, they will no longer confound the essential distinctions of moral character, because they will no longer be deceived by mere appearances. Things will then be called by their right names. *The fool* (in the emphatic scriptural sense, the wicked man) *will no longer be called noble* (men will no longer attach ideas of dignity and greatness to the name or person of presumptuous sinners), *and the churl* (or niggard) *will no more be spoken of as liberal.* A.

6. This verse endorses the correct moral sentiments of which he had just spoken, declaring that they are in accordance with facts and righteousness. The vile person *ought* to be no more called liberal "*for*" he will speak villainy, etc. The extreme inhumanities here adulated are manifestly thought of as outrages against God, and practically as involving the worst forms of error as to Him and as to the duties we owe Him.

7. The "churl" (a man both niggardly and covetous) should by no means be called "bountiful"—*i.e.*, liberal; generous, for his means of enriching himself ("his instruments") will be bad. He will devise crafty schemes to destroy the poor with lying words (overreaching, defrauding, getting the advantage unjustly) even when the poor man has justice on his side—*i.e.*, as said here, when his speaking (statements) are all right (in Heb. "judgment"). They that will be rich fall into this ruinous temptation to overestimate their own claims, and underestimate or even quite disregard the claims and rights of others, and especially of those who are defenceless against their aggressions.

8. On the other hand, the really liberal, noble-hearted man will approve himself by his deeds. He will devise not "wicked devices," but "liberal things," and upon these he will *stand* in the sense of persevering in them and building up himself upon them. Hence, as the conclusion of this special subject, that is a blessed state of society in which men are estimated according to what they truly are and the name they bear in common parlance witnesses truly

to the character of their deeds. When every man's reputation and name shall be *as* his heart and life, virtue will have its due honor and vice its merited disgrace.

One that is truly liberal, and deserves the honor of being called so, makes it his business to do good to everybody, according as his sphere is. Observe, 1. The care he takes and the contrivances he has to do good. He devises liberal things; as much as the churl or niggard projects how to save and lay up what he has for himself only, so much the good, charitable man projects how to use and lay out what he has in the best manner for the good of others. Charity must be directed by wisdom, and liberal things done prudently and with device, that the good intention of them may be answered, that it may not be charity misplaced. The liberal man, when he has done all the liberal things that are in his own power, devises liberal things for others to do according to their power, and puts them upon doing them. 2. The comfort he takes and the advantage he has in doing good; by liberal things he shall stand or be established. The providence of God will reward him for his liberality with a settled prosperity and an established reputation. The grace of God will give him abundance of satisfaction and confirmed peace in his own bosom; what disquiets others shall not disturb him; his heart is fixed. This is the recompense of charity (Ps. 112 : 5, 6). H.

Let it not be supposed that liberality is confined to the giving of money for the doing of good. A fair and open demeanor; a candid consideration of the rights and feelings of others; a relaxation or a waiving of our own rights when the pursuing of them is likely to be injurious; an avoidance of all captiousness and contention; a scorning to take advantage, and a willingness that others should be benefited as well as ourselves—these are some of the ways in which true liberality will manifest itself. *Ferguson.*

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." That saying takes heaven's point of view in regard to what makes true blessedness. The world says the exact opposite, because the world is based on self-regard. God is Himself the great example of the higher truth, because God is love. He is "the giving God," therefore He is "the blessed God." Love ever delights to bestow. In the measure in which we drink in Christ's spirit we shall know the blessedness which filled His heart, and find in imparting a purer joy than in acquiring. Unless we have begun to know and feel this,

what token do we show of being Christ's?
A. M.

Giving is the nobler part of man, the side of him that lies highest and nearest to God. We of the present generation enjoy abundant opportunity for the exercise of this grace, if this grace live in our hearts. The heathen are in great need; their need is better known and their locality more easily reached than in former times. At home, too, the harvest is great and ripe, and ready to perish; it lies, moreover, close to the reaper's hand. Those who count it blessed to do and give may be very happy in our day, for the sources of their enjoyment are accessible and full. *Arnot.*

There is no necessary antagonism between material and spiritual wealth. Both come from God. Moses brought down from Sinai this message to the Hebrews. "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for He it is who giveth the power to get wealth." That message is not obsolete. It is a message for the men of all lands and ages. It is right to pray for temporal prosperity. But we cannot pray for it so as to be heard and answered unless we ask also for the true riches, the faith that will enable us to use our gold and silver aright, to lay up treasures in heaven by employing them for the good of our fellow-men and for the glory of God. The man who, in the midst of his abundance, can look up with a grateful heart and say, "All things are of Thee," and who, trusting that the giver will help him to keep and to use aright what he has given, lives and gives as a steward of the Lord, that man can enjoy his wealth here. It is worth more to him now a "hundredfold" than the wealth which is selfishly sought and hoarded. And when the earth and all that is therein is burned up, he will have durable riches in heaven. *Babb.*

The unvarying law of God which attaches an obligation to every opportunity and places a duty over against every right extends to the use of wealth, as well as to the use of the other powers which are under the control of a man's will. Wealth is power. The possession of wealth gives a man *potential power of service*. By this ability to serve which wealth confers, its owner is bound actually to serve the best interests of his fellow-men. And for the unselfish use of all his powers, every man must give an account to the God who has taught us that no man liveth to himself alone. *M. E. Gates.*

Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. Use that which is so generally abused that men shall praise and bless

you. The possessors of wealth should feel themselves called of God to become the benefactors of the race, to lay plans and create institutions that shall become fountains of widespread and permanent good. He who uses his wealth in this way, making it the instrument of an intelligent beneficence, will not grind the faces of the poor nor defraud the laborer of his hire. The Church and the world will always need the gifts of the poor, and we are warned not to despise the widow's mite; but there are and there will continue to be demands for alleviating suffering and increasing general comfort, that can be met only as the prospered few hear in them the voice of God. Wealth has its opportunity and use; and when it shall be rightly used everywhere and by all, the poorest will have occasion for thanksgiving. *Behrends.*

9-20. Long desolations are here foretold, to cease only by a large outpouring of the spirit of God. The women of Israel are first addressed, as sharing largely in the sin of the people. The address is not to be confined to Jerusalem and Judah alone. The warning is general, and reaches from Isaiah's days till the wasting is complete. *Birks.*

13-15. Though the immediate bearing of these words is, in all probability, upon the state and prospects of the Jewish people, yet by parity of reasoning it may be extended much farther, and may be considered as assigning the reason why the nations of the earth continue in so wretched a state, with respect to things spiritual and divine, as that which they now exhibit; and they may be considered as directing our expectations and regulating our confidence respecting the final termination of this state of things, teaching that it will come to an end, that a great and beneficial change will take place, but not till the Spirit be poured out from on high. Then, and not till then, will "the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." *R. Hall.*

The contrasts are most impressive. The palace, once the scene of feasting and merriment, is forsaken and lonely. The peopled city, once filled with the hum and murmur of thronging multitudes, is a deserted solitude. Fortress and tower, once garrisoned by the strength of the land, are to be dens for the beasts of the field. The careless mirth of luxurious women is to be replaced by the joy of wild asses, that rove carelessly amid deserted ruins. These desolations, caused by national sin, will cease only when true repentance has followed the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Then the

wilderness will become a planted field, like the vineyard and oliveyard, and the planted field like the forest of Lebanon, with its glorious clothing of lofty pines and stately cedars. The barren will become beautiful, and the beautiful majestic and sublime. Such a pentecostal blessing still awaits the land of promise at the final recovery and ingathering of Israel. *Birks.*

15. It can scarcely be doubted that this allusion to the Spirit has a somewhat special reference to that great effusion with which the gospel age opened. Yet this should not be pressed so as to exclude other cases of like sort. The passage rather teaches the general doctrine that moral degeneracy brings upon men physical desolation and that both the degeneracy and the desolation will continue according to the laws of human nature and of society, until God's Spirit is poured out from on high. The recuperative power which redeems society and recalls men to penitence and a new life is not in themselves, nor in God's judgments alone, but really in the Spirit of God. Hence the Jewish nation continued impenitent and unreclaimed through the wicked reign of Ahaz, and onward until the effusions of God's Spirit in the times of Hezekiah. On a yet broader scale, the nation, save at few exceptional periods, declined in its moral tone during the ages until their Messiah came, and yet more rapidly during His earthly life and public ministry until the Spirit was gloriously shed forth on the day of Pentecost; then blessed life came up upon that death, and a precious remnant were redeemed. *H. C.*

The truth of Christ taught and preached, accompanied by the Spirit of Christ, is the agency of the world's renovation. It is this that is to change the whole moral and spiritual condition of this disordered and suffering world, the means by which the conquests of this new kingdom are to be achieved, its government established over the life, its principles implanted in the heart, and the millennial blessings of its beneficent reign bestowed on universal man. Gospel truth is the instrumental means, and the Holy Spirit, who is so emphatically termed in the New Testament "the Spirit of Christ," is the quickening and efficient power. *Lorraine.*

The native character of man is an odious character; it has no moral beauty until it is transformed by the power of God. The more immediate effects of that transformation are beautiful to look upon, though they present but the faint lineaments of the veriest babe in Christ. Its first emotions of love, its first beamings of hope, its first lisps of prayer,

its first notes of praise, how beautiful and heavenly they are! We are told that "there is joy among the angels of God when one sinner repenteth." A beautiful sight it is when, though he treads the straight and narrow way alone, he enters upon the path of life. There are thoughts of wisdom in his bosom, and there are transparent emotions and heaven-imparted purposes of devotedness to God, which are in sympathy with angels. It is a renovated mind which he possesses, one that "is come to excellent ornaments," and one that will be recognized and honored in the day "when the Lord of hosts shall make up His jewels." And when such instances of moral transformation are multiplied and simultaneous, as they often are when the Spirit is poured from on high, what scenes of beauty does the eye rest upon! How much more beautiful than dewy landscape or blushing morn when "the desert thus blossoms as the rose, and the wilderness becomes as the garden of the Lord." *H. B. Smith.*

16, 17. Whether men's external circumstances correspond to a wilderness or to a fruitful field, the fruits of the Spirit of God in their souls will be judgment and righteousness. How little those fruits of the Spirit are dependent on earthly conditions, on the trivial circumstances of wealth and prosperity, affliction or poverty, all experience and observation testify. In verse 17 "righteousness" must be taken in a broad sense, involving primarily a just government, but including also righteousness in all the relations and transactions of life—righteousness between man and man; righteousness in the family as well as in general society; and radically righteousness toward God, the fear of His name and reverence for His law. The fruit of such righteousness is forcibly said to be "peace;" and since the last clause is strictly parallel, its fruit is also "quietness and assurance forever." Being at peace with God as well as with each other, men who are thoroughly, religiously righteous, repose sweetly in God and rest in the assurance of His love forever. *H. C.*

17. "Inward peace" follows upon the indwelling of righteousness (verse 16). Those in whom that work is wrought shall experience this blessed product of it. It is itself peace, and the effect of it "quietness and assurance forever," a holy serenity and security of mind, by which the soul enjoys itself and its God, and it is not in the power of this world to disturb it in those enjoyments. Peace and quietness and everlasting assurance may be expected, and shall be found, in the way and work of right-

eousness. True satisfaction is to be had only in true religion, and there it is to be had without fail. H.—The peace which is found in the Christian's heart grows out of something else which God has put into the Christian's heart. It is the fruit of that grace and holiness, the result of those pure and heavenly dispositions, which are wrought within him by the Holy Ghost. Holiness is the root of happiness. It contains within itself the germ, the elements and materials, of it. Hence the Lord says, "The work of righteousness shall be peace and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever." *C. Bradley.*

As there is but one atonement by which guilty sinners are pardoned, so there is but one righteousness, even Christ's perfect righteousness, by which alone unrighteous sinners are made righteous in God's sight. He accepts no other. His law is honored by no other. The Scriptures reveal no other. Faith receives no other. The Spirit bears witness to no other. Sinners have no other to stand in before God, and enjoy peace with Him. But possessing this righteousness by faith, we enjoy a peace which passeth all understanding. There are many things from a sinful nature, Satan and the law, to disquiet our minds daily. But the blessed effect of Jesus' righteousness is quietness to the conscience. This comforting thought, my Father hath accepted me through the righteousness which my glorious Redeemer wrought out for me, quiets my mind. I am satisfied. I can seek no better. I dare trust in no other. *W. Mason.*

Peace is sure; peace with God, peace in my own tranquil and righteous heart, peace for a world from out of which sin shall be scourged; peace is sure because righteousness is ours, since it is Christ's. And for ourselves, if we want—and who does not want?—to "be found of Him in peace, without spot, blameless," let us see to it that we "are found, not having our own righteousness, but that which is of God through

faith." Christ is King of Peace only to those to whom He has become, through their humble trust, the King of Righteousness. *Anon.*

The Christian, "being justified by faith," he has first "peace with God;" then he "joys in God by whom he has received the atonement;" and then he enters into that "great peace" which they have "who love God's law." Taught to long and pray and labor for conformity to His holy precepts, he finds that "the fruit of righteousness is peace, and the effect thereof quietness and assurance forever." And this is the Christian's peace. It has as its basis forgiving mercy; it is connected with a discovery of this mercy; it proceeds from a conviction of a real and peculiar interest in it; it is established and enlarged and sweetened by that purification of the mind, which is the work of the Holy Ghost. *Bradley.*

18. *And my people shall abide in a home of peace, in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.* There is something tranquillizing in the very sound of this delightful promise, which, as usual, is limited to God's own people, implying either that all should have become such, or that those who had not should be still perturbed and restless. *A.*

20. Taken figuratively, as the exigencies of the context require, the prophet declares the blessedness of those who, however disturbed society may be, or however much the nation may rock under hail-storms and bewail its fallen cities, yet press on with unwearied assiduity, doing what good they can, sowing seed unto salvation beside all waters and pushing every fit agency wisely and without faltering. The spirit of the verse suggests these words of the psalmist: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Ps. 126 : 6). In Christ's gospel kingdom there will be such faithful workers. The words that affirm their blessedness of course assume their existence and their faithful work. *H. C.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXXIII.

33:1 Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! When thou hast ceased to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou hast made an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee. O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble. At the noise of the tumult the peoples are fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations are scattered. And your spoil shall be gathered as the caterpillar gathereth: as locusts leap shall they leap upon it. The LORD is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgement and righteousness. And there shall be stability in thy times, abundance of salvation, wisdom and knowledge: the fear of the LORD is his treasure.

7, 8 Behold, their valiant ones cry without: the ambassadors of peace weep bitterly. The high ways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth not man. The land mourneth and languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed and withereth away: Sharon is like a desert; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their leaves. Now will I arise, saith the LORD; now will I lift up myself; now will I be exalted. Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath is a fire that shall devour you. And the peoples shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut down, that are burned in the fire.

13 Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might. 14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling hath surprised the godless ones. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? 15 He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from looking upon evil; he shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: his bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold a far stretching land. 18 Thine heart shall muse on the terror: where is he that counted, where is he that weighed the tribute? where is he that counted the towers? Thou shalt not see the fierce people, a people of a deep speech that thou canst not perceive; of a strange tongue that thou canst not understand. Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tent that shall not be removed, the stakes whereof shall never be plucked up, 21 neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the LORD will be with us in majesty, a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us. Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not strengthen the foot of their mast, they could not spread the sail: then was the prey of a great spoil divided; 24 the lame took the prey. And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.

Chap. 33. The central historic fact of this chapter is the destruction of the Assyrian army, apparently when near Jerusalem. The woe of verse 1 refers to them; the prayer of verse 2 seeks help from God against them; the scenes that follow cluster about that great event. In the last half of the chapter (verses 13-24) the event is supposed to have taken place, and the prophet gives us some of its various effects and results. H. C.

This chapter contains a general threatening of retribution to the enemies of God's people,

with particular reference to Sennacherib or the Assyrian power. The spoiler shall himself be spoiled in due time, through the Divine interposition, and for the exaltation of Jehovah (verses 1-6). The state of desolation and alarm is followed by sudden deliverance (verses 7-13). The same vicissitudes are again described, but in another form (verses 14-19). The peace and security of Zion are set forth under the figures of a stationary tent, and of a spot surrounded by broad rivers, yet impassable to hostile vessels (verses 20-22). By a beautiful transition,

the enemy is described as such a vessel, but dismantled and abandoned to its enemies (verse 23). The chapter closes with a general promise of deliverance from suffering, as a consequence of pardoned sin (verse 24). A.

1. It is due to the great law of Divine retribution that wicked nations, having abused their great power to subdue, spoil and oppress others, should be themselves in turn subdued and spoiled. If they have not had their retribution yet, all the more surely is it still in store, awaiting its time. Hence this woe on the proud and conquering Assyrian. H. C.

2. The truth seems to be, as Barnes well says, that Isaiah here interposes his own feelings, and offers his own prayer that God would be the strength of the nation, and then, with an immediate change of form, presents the prayer of the people. *Arm* is a common Hebrew metaphor for strength or support. (See chap. 9:19.) A.—In our spiritual warfare our own hands are not sufficient for us, nor can we bring anything to pass unless God not only strengthens our arms, but be Himself our Arm; so entirely do we depend upon Him as our Arm every morning, so constantly do we depend upon His power, as well as His compassions, which are new every morning. If God leaves us to ourselves any morning, we are undone; we must therefore every morning commit ourselves to Him, and go forth in His strength to do the work of the day in its day. H.

How much care a man hath to please God, so much confidence may he have to cast all his care upon Him. *J. Arrowsmith*.—Believers have a present faith, which they exercise every day, saying, "Be Thou their arm every morning!" They do not imagine that by having trusted in God years ago they have obtained salvation, and therefore may now live without faith; but they believe to-day as they believed from the beginning of their Christian life, and so prove it true that "the just shall live by his faith." Every step they are depending, every morning they are looking up to the hills whence cometh their help. These are the true people of God, and the only people of God—trusting, hoping, expecting, relying and resting upon the Lord their God. The fear of the Lord is their treasure, and they cry with exultation in the language of the twenty-second verse, "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; He will save us." The description in our actual text is the portrait of their outer life; but a living faith is the secret basis and foundation of it all. *Spurgeon*.

Guard thyself from sin and temptation, but know that thy own strength is not sufficient for this great work, and therefore do not forget most humbly and earnestly to implore the Divine mercy and protection. For when the door is sealed and kept by Him, all thy faculties will be under His government; no thought can go in or out, or lodge there, but by His permission; the family of heaven and earth will bear thee company; thousands of angels will pitch their tents about thee, and guard the passes of thy outward senses, that no unclean thing enter there. And the great adversary of souls, how mighty and formidable soever in himself, will not be able to break through these bright armies, nor dare to make his attacks, which he foresees will prove unsuccessful. So great an awe will the dread of this Divine Keeper strike; so sure a defence will these heavenly succors be against that otherwise invincible enemy. *Bernard*.

5. The Lord is (or has been) exalted—*i.e.*, in the overthrow of the Assyrian host—a thing He could easily do, "for He dwelleth on high," clothed with all power in heaven and earth. He hath thoroughly vindicated His Zion against the contempt of her enemies, revealing Himself as the righteous God so gloriously that He may be said to have filled Zion with these manifestations. H. C.—Safety in Zion belongs to those born in her by regeneration, reared in her by sanctification, enfranchised in her by faith in the Son of God, settled in her by fixed principles, confirmed in her by obedience to her laws, and bound to her by intense love of her king and her citizens. Such "shall dwell on high" secure from danger, and only such. *Spurgeon*.

6. The sentiment of the verse is that God has now become everything, all in all, to His saved and trusting people—their stability as a nation; their fountain of salvation; their source of wisdom and knowledge. H. C.

The passage is a plain prediction as to the state of affairs in the kingdom the coming Messiah was to establish on earth and in heaven, the kingdom of God. It is a prediction as to principles and their operation; moral energies and their results. It reveals forces and fore-shows effects that were little known or acknowledged when it was spoken. Wisdom is the living embodiment, action and direction of the fundamental and vital principles on which God constituted all things and built the worlds. It is the projected energy of the Divine mind, pouring itself, according to the nature, constitution and relation of the infinite reason, power, liberty and love of God, into all moral intelli-

gences, all ranks of created being and all things formed by the hand Divine. Private probity, personal worth, general intelligence and public integrity are the bulwarks of peace, and the sure and only safeguards of the steady ongoing of public affairs; and this is what we mean by "the stability of the times;" not immobility, but steady, healthful progress. Human society avoids sudden revolutions only by healthful advancement. Government is solid and secure only as it deviseth liberal measures, maintains just and honorable dealings, searches out and promotes the general good and cherishes philanthropy and freedom. All the moral forces of the universe, all the energy of the great God, all the constitution and course of nature, all providential movements and provisions, are pledged to the overthrow of any and every people that regard not justice, right and truth. No nation can endure built on violence, pride and wrong. The mightiest empires have been swept away; and so must it continue under the government of God, till men learn righteousness, charity and faith. Only so can they learn war no more. Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of the times when Jesus, the Messiah, reigns, whose right it is. Salvation is of God, originates in His wisdom, love and power, and culminates in the energy Divine to the Divine glory. But as displayed among men, wisdom and knowledge are the staying strength of salvation, imparting its fibre and aggressive strength, filling it with an unconquerable energy. It is wisdom and knowledge, not fanaticism and ignorance; not spasm and vain enthusiasm, but steady wisdom and calm, clear knowledge that are the strength of salvation. *A. Carman.*

Our age is one of intense earnestness and action both for good and evil. The old truth and the old error which have struggled throughout the past are in the field. But neither is slumbering, both are vigilant, extending their lines, increasing their forces, devising and adopting new modes of defence and attack, as if conscious that a blow was about to be struck which would mark another great era in the conflict between the powers of good and evil. There are giants on the earth in these days both in the one encampment and in the other. A mighty force is on the side of the friends of truth, but it is sadly divided and scattered. What is wanting is the strength of union, the concentration of those energies in defending the citadel and making inroads on the enemy, which are spent on the defence of comparatively unimportant posts, or in one detachment of

the same corps guarding against the encroachment of another. The champions of error, though not without their discords and divisions, are yet wiser in their generation than the children of light. As of old they discern the signs of the times, and take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed. The press, to which under God we owe so much of our light and liberties, wields a mighty influence on the side of evil. The halls of philosophy, hallowed though they be by many a name illustrious for Christian worth as well as intellectual greatness, are often sending forth doctrines as gross as the earth or as vague as the air, but alike adverse to that truth which coming from above is above all. Our current literature and works on science, with not a few bright and beneficent exceptions, are hostile either by their silence in reference to Divine truth when their subjects afford them occasions to speak out, or by their avowed opposition to much of what constitutes the essence of true religion. And what is peculiar in a great measure to our times, and throws a vast potency into the scale of irreligion, is the unceasing effort of infidels to diffuse their principles among the artisans and laboring classes of the land. The earth is not still and at rest. Men of every class are searching after an unknown good. One dreary theory succeeds another, like storm-cloud chasing storm-cloud over the face of the sky, and yet man is not at peace. The cravings of his mind are agonized, not satisfied. It becomes those then who know the truth and whom the truth has made free, those who having believed do enter into rest, to arouse themselves for the twofold object of meeting infidelity at its various points and combatting its diversified forms, and of presenting in every lawful way that truth which they know only can give rest to a laboring and heavy-laden world. Let the antagonist forces on the one side as well as on the other be pressed into the unfettered conflict, and the lovers of God and the friends of man have nothing to fear, but much to hope. "Christianity may feel assured that, as in so many past instances of premature triumph, on the part of her enemies, the ground they occupy will one day be her own; that the very discoveries, apparently hostile, of science and philosophy will be ultimately found elements of her strength." *Pearson.*

7. The next three verses (7-9) fall back to describe the scenes of dismay and agitation which immediately preceded that night of great deliverance. "The ambassadors of peace" are

probably those three men whose names, mission, negotiations, failure and bitter grief appear in the passages, 2 K. 18:18-37 and Isa. 36:3-22. The history records that they came back to Hezekiah "with their clothes rent," corresponding to the statement here, "Shall weep bitterly." H. C.—The prophet describes the disappointment of Hezekiah's ambassadors, who humbly sued for peace (which indeed had been bought, 2 K. 18:14, 15, 16, though Sennacherib would not stand to the agreement); the damp that struck upon the spirits of the whole nation; and (verse 10) the immediate interposition of God when matters became desperate. *W. Lowth.*

9. This group of figures represents all nature as afflicted, depressed and desolate, to give the reader an idea of the state of the kingdom and people on the eve of being (to human view) utterly crushed before the resistless power of Assyria. H. C.

10-12. In this crisis the arm of the Almighty would be made bare, "In the mount the Lord shall be seen." The word *now*, three times repeated, sets this truth in fullest relief. That earlier message must now be verified—"And the loftiness of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." That day is now come, the type of one still more solemn, when the world of sinners shall be arraigned before the judgment-seat of Christ.

11. Your breath. The threats, in which they breathed out destruction against God's people, would recoil on themselves. As they had sought to do, so God would requite them. The punishment would answer to the sin. The boasts and blasphemies of Rabshakeh made keen and sharp the sword of the destroying angel. Thorns cut up were used as fuel in the lime-kilns of Palestine. *Birks.*—Those people among the rocks yonder are cutting up thorns with their mattocks and pruning-hooks, and gathering them into bundles to be burned in these burnings of lime. It is a curious fidelity to real life, that, when the thorns are merely to be destroyed, they are never cut up, but set on fire where they grow. They are only cut up for the lime-kiln. *Thomson.*

12. These various forms of destruction by fire are of course figures to represent that swift, terrible, resistless ruin with which God swept the Assyrian host.

14. The second clause should be read, *condemnation has seized upon hardened sinners!* The questions that follow are put by these

wicked Jews of Jerusalem in view of a judgment so appalling before their very eyes. "Who of us," living so near to such a God, and more guilty than even the Assyrians, "shall dwell with the devouring fire," of which these fires of God (verses 11, 12) on the Assyrians are a symbol? "Who of us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" For if the burnings of Divine judgment for one night are so fearful, who shall abide them when they burn forever? This is manifestly the spirit of these interrogations. Who can say that their logic is not appropriate and even resistless? They assume (why should they not?) that the judgments of God on guilty nations fairly represent the spirit of Divine retributions for sin in general, and therefore give us the data from which to infer the judgments of God on individual sinners in the world to come, where only we can rationally locate the real and full retributions of justice upon sinners in their individual character and relations. H. C.

15, 16. The words are not an answer to the previous questions, but a transition from the deep alarm of one class to the peaceful security of the other. How safe are they whom His favor encompasses like a shield! Their wants, even in this life, will be provided for. But above all they will eat of that bread of life, and drink of that water of life, which satisfy forever. *Birks.*—The wicked have one doom, the righteous another. The doom of the former is set forth as inconceivably awful; the latter under illustrative images of peace, safety, abundance, blessedness. This description of the good man is strong on the points most distinctive of upright character in those times. H. C.

15. This verse contains a description of the righteous man, not unlike that in the fifteenth and twenty-fourth Psalms. "*Walking righteousness*"—i.e., leading a righteous life. "*Walk*" is a common scriptural expression for the course of conduct. The plural form of the other word may either be used to mark it as an abstract term or as an emphatic expression for fullness or completeness of rectitude. A.

True firmness is only the result of a perpetual and persevering honesty of mind. He that always walks by the same rule need not be afraid of inconsistency. Make the love of truth the supreme principle of thought, guard against the influences which are likely to seduce you into error, love truth for itself and not for its dowry, and your path will be as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. *Thornwell.*—All noble, cultured

character is reached only through struggle. It is not natural, but is the fruit of toil and conquest. It bears the marks and scars of many a conflict. Contentment, self-control, sweetness of disposition, submissiveness to God's will or power of sympathy are things that cannot be bought and that cannot be learned in any school. Such qualities can be gotten only through victorious struggle during years of experience. We say that Christ gives His disciples this spiritual loveliness, that He renews their natures and transforms their lives, imprinting His own image upon them. This is true. If it were not, there could never be any hope of saintliness in any human life; yet Christ does not produce this change in us merely by instantaneously printing His likeness upon our souls as the photographer prints one's picture on the glass in his camera. He works in us, but we must work out the beauty which He puts in germ into our hearts. Thus the noble things of spiritual attainment lie away beyond the hills and the rivers, and we must toil far through strife and pain before we can get them. Every good thing and every noble thing must be won. Heaven is for those who overcome. J. R. M.—The stirring times in which we are privileged to live call for heroic efforts, but the efforts will not be unavailing. They call for faith and truth, but it is on these foundations that all great results must rest. They call for self-denial and discipline, but so it is alone that we can learn what is the peace of perfect freedom. They call for trustful love for man, for loving trust in God, but it is by love that the heart of man is opened, and by trust that the help of God is won. The very dangers which seem imminent rouse us to a sublimer faith. Human weakness is the vantage-ground of Divine strength. *Bp. Westcott.*

16. Words cannot tell the privilege of the man who lives in God, and lives with God! He need not shiver in the damps of earth—he lives on high; he need not fear the fury of the enemy, for he has a place of defence; he need not dread the lapse of time, his munitions are of rock; he need not tremble at famine and drought, his needs shall all be met by the care of heaven. The man who knows his sins are forgiven, who is covered with the righteousness of Christ, who is in vital union with the Lord Jesus, who is indwelt by the Holy Ghost—that man, I say, need not desire to be any other than he is, but may give himself up to blessing and praising and magnifying the Most High every moment of his life till he is caught up to the highest heaven, to dwell

where enemies cannot threaten nor necessities arise. *Spurgeon.*

17. The pious in Jerusalem rejoice over the ruin of the Assyrian army. Again they shall see their king in his beauty (no longer, as of late, in sackcloth and tears). They shall behold the land to a great distance, as contrasted with being closely shut up within the walls of Jerusalem. Now they go abroad far as they choose in safety. Practically their country is to them greatly enlarged, which is a rich blessing. H. C.—To the believer the King is the same as in verse 22, "The Lord is our King, He will save us." It is thus "Immanuel, God with us," the Child whose name shall be called "the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." He is the same of whom the psalmist writes, "Thou art fairer than the children of men." The faithful will see this King in His heavenly beauty, and seeing Him, be transformed into His image. They will be like Him, for they will see Him as He is. *Birks.*

The prophet tells us that under the Gospel covenant God's servants will have the privilege of seeing those heavenly sights which were but shadowed out under the law. As Christ, who is the truth, has come to us, so does He in return require that we should be true and sincere in our dealings with Him. To be true and sincere is really to see with our minds those great wonders which He has wrought in order that we might see them. The promise is expressly made to us (Isa. 30:20; 32:3, 5) that "our teachers shall not be removed into a corner any more, but our eyes shall see our teachers;" that "the eyes of them that see shall not be dim;" that "the vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl bountiful;" in a word, as the text speaks, that "our eyes shall see the King in His beauty; we shall behold the land that is very far off." Our professions, our creeds, our prayers, our dealings, our conversation, our teaching, must henceforth be sincere, or, to use an expressive word, must be *real*. We must *aim* at seeing things as God sees them; forming judgments about persons, events, fortunes, changes, objects, such as God forms; looking at this life, at the life to come and the world unseen as God looks at them. We must aim at "seeing the King in His beauty." All things that we see are but shadows to us and delusions unless we enter into what they really mean. *Newman.*

Every honest searching of the heart to root out of it what God hates; every earnest effort to lay hold upon the forgiveness which is Christ's Gospel; every sorrowful, tearful.

prayer for the help and grace and love of God; every intense aspiration after a diviner life than yet has been realized, and a more Christlike spirit than has yet been manifested, is a seeking after "the things above." Every soul's hunger and thirst after God's kingdom and righteousness; every brave blow struck at a sin; every sincere endeavor to make an ignorant, an unhappy life brighter and better, is a seeking of "the things above." By degrees there shall be in every such seeker a change of places between earth and heaven. Earth shall take a new position in that man, and heaven a new position in his heart and in his affections. From *seeking* he shall rise into *thinking* "the things above;" and when at last the door opens and he is called in to see "the King in His beauty," he shall find himself in no strange scene, in no unfamiliar company. *Seeking* has become *seeing*; prayer has become converse, warfare has become victory; he has "come to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus Christ, Lord both of the dead and the living." *C. J. Vaughan.*

We too often speak as if the "entrance ministered at last to" a believing soul "into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour," were our first entrance therein, and forget that we enter it as soon as we yield to the drawings of Christ's love and take service under the king. The change then is greater than at death. When we die, we shall change provinces, and go from an outlying colony to the mother city and seat of empire, but we shall not change kingdoms. We shall be under the same government, only then we shall be nearer the King and more loyal to Him. That change of king is the real fitness for heaven. We know little of what profound changes death may make, but clearly a physical change cannot effect a spiritual revolution. They who are not Christ's subjects will not become so by dying. If here we are trying to serve a king who has delivered us from the tyranny of darkness, we may be very sure that He will not lose His subjects in the darkness of the grave. Let us choose our king. If we take Christ for our heart's Lord, every thought of Him here, every piece of partial obedience and stained service, as well as every sorrow and every joy, our fading possessions and our undying treasures, the feeble new life that wars against our sins, and even the very sins themselves as contradictory of our deepest self, unite to seal to us the assurance, "Thine eyes shall the King in His beauty. They shall behold the land that is very far off." *A. M.*

The central charm of Heaven is *the King in His beauty*. The Lamb is the light thereof. It needs no temple, for He is the temple of it. Every attraction centres in Him. And he to whom Christ is not the altogether lovely is not prepared for heaven. The heavenly land is the home of the saints—a promised land indeed, an abiding place. There is the river of the water of life and the tree of life. There can be no hunger or thirst. There is no night there, and so no gloom or shadow. All tears are wiped away. The tabernacle of God is with men. And nothing enters that defiles. Such a land is very far off—not perhaps in locality, but in experience and in perfection. *Sherwood.*

For light to walk by, for strength to work, for patience to wait, for steadfastness to watch, may I dwell consciously and continually with the Lord Jesus. For power to resist the devil and to conquer sin; for grace to deny self and to bear the reproach of Christ; to chose, to refuse, to be active, to be patient for His sake; for courage to confess Him, and to be instant in season and out of season in winning souls to Him; for wisdom to know when to speak and when to be silent; when to be cheerful and when to be grave; for grace to be meek and lowly in heart, and to be tender, as the Lord was, to sinners, and to be pure even as He is pure; and that I may be made to overflow with unwearying, unquenchable love—love to Himself—love to the brethren and love to all creatures for whom He died; that I may be able to enjoy and feed upon His word, and to find it life and strength to my soul, and to preserve me from being corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ—God over all, blessed forever, so fill me with Thy spirit that I may constantly realize my union with Thy blessed Son—as one spirit with a living, loving Saviour; and by *faith* see Him who is invisible, until the day when *mine eyes* shall see the King in His beauty. *Miss Marsh's Shining Light.*

18. The general meaning of the verse is plain, as an expression of surprise and joy that the oppressor or besieger had now vanished. The Apostle Paul, in 1 Cor. 1:20, has a sentence so much like this, in the threefold repetition of the question *where*, and in the use of the word *scribe*, that it cannot be regarded as a mere fortuitous coincidence.

20. Instead of the presence of foreign enemies, see Jerusalem once more the scene of stated solemnities. The peculiar beauty of the imagery lies in ascribing permanence to a tent, which from its very nature must be movable. This may either imply a previous state of agi-

tation and instability, or that the Church, though weak in herself, should be strengthened and established by the power of God. A.—The sacred city is to stand unharmed by her fierce and bloody foes, a living type of the ever-enduring Church of God, against which no weapon forged by wicked hands shall prosper.

21. The figure represents Jehovah as being to Jerusalem what the great Euphrates was to Babylon or the Nile to Thebes—its glory, beauty and wealth; yet with this remarkable exception, that it should open no avenue for an armed foe to approach by water. The war vessels of ancient times are described here—a galley with oars and a gallant ship proudly bearing its implements of death. H. C.—It is the glorious Lord who will be unto us a “place of broad rivers and streams;” and with the infinite “depth of the riches both of His wisdom and knowledge,” we shall feel that “neither height nor depth shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” *Ker.*

22. This verse translates the figures of the two verses previous into literal language. The Lord, our King and Lawgiver, holding us while obedient under His perfect protection, is pre-eminently our glory and strength. H. C.

23. Interpreters are agreed that there is at the beginning of this verse a sudden apostrophe to the enemy considered as a ship. This figure would be naturally suggested by those of verse 21. It was there said that no vessel should approach the holy city. But now the prophet seems to remember that one had done so, the proud ship of Assyria. He sees it dismantled and abandoned to its enemies. A.

24. All is well in the holy city. The allusion to the “lame” may have suggested that now and onward, in these better days of Zion, none shall say, “I am sick.” None are disabled, none are suffering. Blessedness is the common lot—rich, deep and pure, for this figure can mean nothing less. The people who dwell there are forgiven; their sins and iniquities are remembered no more. H. C.—The words may be taken in a wide sense—viz., that suffering shall cease with sin which is its cause. Thus understood, the words are strictly applicable only to a state of things still future, either upon earth or in heaven. A.

The truth of the promise remains, though we have no means of knowing more than the fact, that we shall receive a body, fashioned like His who dieth no more. There shall be no weariness nor consequent need for repose—“they rest not day nor night.” There shall be no

faintness nor consequent craving for sustenance—“they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.” There shall be no disease—“the inhabitant thereof shall no more say, I am sick,” “neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels.” And if all this be true, that glorious and undecaying body shall then be the equal and fit instrument of the perfected spirit, not, as it is now, the adequate instrument only of the natural life. A. M.

The *essence* of eternal life consists in its entire freedom from sin. It is the presence of sin in our nature which is at the root of every other evil, and deliverance from suffering in heaven is connected with perfect deliverance from sin. “The inhabitants shall not say, I am sick, for the people of the land are forgiven their iniquity.” Doubt about God and distrust of Him are the most painful of all things to any one who feels what the soul’s life ought to be—a perfect repose in God’s love that there may be freedom and happiness in His service. This world to most Christians is a fitful struggle to attain a portion of this. When Moses said, “I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory,” he was answered that he could not see God’s face, but that His name would be made to pass before him, as “the Lord God merciful and gracious.” It is still the utmost we can hope for here, and we do not always enjoy it. But of the resurrection state it is said, “They shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads.” That must be a happy condition when all of them shall feel the blessedness of the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and the subject which often causes anxious thought, “can I look to God as my friend and Father?” shall be settled for perpetuity—no doubt, nor shadow of a doubt upon it, but quietness and assurance forever. And when there shall be not only no guilt on the conscience, no sin in the heart, no lurking sympathy with it, but every fibre of the root of poison extracted, and the tree of life shall find its counterpart in the perfect fruit of every redeemed soul! How blessed must that state be when there shall be no envy nor uncharitableness to any one, nothing of humiliation or shame for having done or cherished what is impure and base, nothing of the feeling of lurking evil within, which makes us wishful, if it were possible, to hide our hearts from the sight of God! This is an ideal which it never entered into man’s heart to conceive, which the Gospel alone has taught us, and which we feel to be worthy of God and of our spiritual nature. *Ker.*

Soon, soon, the saints of the earth shall be

saints in light ; their hairs of snowy age shall be crowned with perpetual joy and everlasting youth ; their eyes suffused with tears shall be made bright as stars, never to be clouded again by sorrow ; their hearts that tremble now are to be made joyous and fast, and set forever like pillars in the temple of God. Their follies, their burdens, their griefs, their woes, are soon to be over ; sin is to be slain, corruption is to be removed, and a heaven of spotless purity and of unmingled peace is to be theirs forever. But it must still be by grace. As was the foundation such must the top-stone be ; that which laid on earth the first beginning must lay in heaven the topmost stone. *Spurgeon*.—Then we shall be enabled to look back at ourselves and to see all the way that the Lord hath led us through the wilderness ; how untiring has been His patience, how immeasur-

able His grace, how inexhaustible the resources of His wisdom, how unwearied the watchfulness of His love, how unremitting the exercise of His power, how unchangeable the constancy of His faithfulness ; or in one summary expression of the apostle, how unsearchable the riches of Christ, as they have been expended, lavished on such sinners, in calling and keeping us and bringing us to Zion ! What a thought, that we *may* be in a moment in the midst of all this ; that we *must* be so very soon ; that all this world shall be like clouds that have flown along the face of the sky—gone, passed ; and where are they ? So shall all the things of time be to us then ; we shall carry nothing with us but the remembrance of ourselves, our sins, and the unsearchable riches of our Lord's grace, goodness and glory—all He has been to us and done for us. *McGhee*.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXXIV.

34 : 1 COME near, ye nations, to hear ; and hearken, ye peoples : let the earth hear, and the fulness thereof ; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the LORD hath indignation against all the nations, and fury against all their host : he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and the stink of their carcases shall come up, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll : and all their host shall fade away, as the leaf fadeth from off the vine, and as a fading leaf from the fig tree. For my sword hath drunk its fill in heaven : behold, it shall come down upon Edom, and upon the people of my curse, to judgement. The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams : for the LORD hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. And the wild-oxen shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls ; and their land shall be drunken with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness. For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, the year of recompence in the controversy of Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day ; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever : from generation to generation it shall lie waste ; none shall pass through it for ever and ever. But the pelican and the porcupine shall possess it ; and the owl and the raven shall dwell therein : and he shall stretch over it the line of confusion, and the plummet of emptiness. They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there ; and all her princes shall be nothing. And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and thistles in the fortresses thereof : and it shall be an habitation of jackals, a court for ostriches. And the wild beasts of the desert shall meet with the wolves, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow ; yea, the night-monster shall settle there, and shall find her a place of rest. There shall the addersnake make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow : yea, there shall the kites be gathered, every one with her mate. Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read : no one of these shall be missing, none shall want her mate : for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them. And he

hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line : they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein.

Chap. 34. This chapter and the next make one distinct prophecy ; an entire, regular and beautiful poem, consisting of two parts—the first containing a denunciation of Divine vengeance against the enemies of the people or Church of God ; the second describing the flourishing state of the Church consequent upon the execution of those judgments. The event foretold is represented as of universal concern ; all nations are called upon to attend to the declaration of it ; and the wrath of God is denounced against all the nations who had provoked to anger the defender of the cause of Zion. *Bp. Louth.*

This chapter presents a broadly comprehensive view of God's judgments on guilty nations, of which Idumea is an instance and an illustration ; and the next a corresponding view of God's blessings upon His people. The nations judged and punished in this chapter are contemplated as the bitter and determined enemies of God and of His people ; so that the exterminating judgments sent on them and the restoring mercies sent on His people are parts of the same Divine policy, manifestations of one and the same Divine Father, promoting the great ends of righteousness and well-being. The same contrast in deeds and in destiny is strongly put in two contiguous verses (3 : 10, 11), " Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him : for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked ! it shall be ill with him : for the reward of his hands shall be given him." The same good Father, because He is good and because He rules justly, awards to each class its destiny according to its doings and deserts. So in these two contiguous chapters, first the wicked, next the righteous, have their destiny portrayed.

Let it be noted that these two chapters (34 and 35) naturally close the series which began with chap. 13, grouping together the prophecies of Isaiah against idolatrous nations with whom the Jews came in contact, including also the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, and indeed the southern kingdom as well so far forth as that kingdom was in apostasy and rebellion against God. In the portions that relate to Judah and Jerusalem, promises alternate with threatenings, indicating God's thoughts of mercy and His purpose in regard to them to reclaim and save. But in the main this series of prophecies makes the judgments of God on wicked na-

tions its central theme, and in this point of view it naturally culminates in the chapter now before us. In point of fearfulness and appalling grandeur, these images of destruction and desolation are unsurpassed. H. C.

The threatenings of chap. 34 are directed, first against the nations in general (verses 1-4), and then against Edom in particular (verses 5-15), with a closing affirmation of the truth and certainty of the prediction (verses 16, 17). The destruction of the enemies of Zion and the desolation of their lands are represented by the figures of a great sacrifice or slaughter, the falling of the heavenly bodies, the conversion of the soil into brimstone and the waters into pitch, and the inhabitation of animals peculiar to the desert. A.—This chapter is not a direct and simple delineation of the judgments that were destined to alight upon Idumea, but rather an ideal representation of the judgments preparing to alight on the enemies generally of God's people, founded upon the approaching desolations of Edom, which it contemplates as the type of the destruction that awaits all the adversaries. P. F.

1. As usual with the prophet when any specially solemn and fearful announcement is to be made, he summons all earth to give attention. The call is to all the people and nations of the wide world. H. C.

4. The best explanation seems, however, to be that proposed by Pfeiffer in his "*Dubia Vexata*"—to wit, that as God is elsewhere described as having stretched out the heavens like a curtain, their destruction or any total change in their appearance would be naturally represented as a rolling up of the expanse. The context clearly shows that the terms used are not symbolical but poetical, and that here, as in chap. 13 : 10, the idea which they are all intended to convey is that of revolution, of sudden, total and appalling change. The imagery of the passage has been partially adopted in Matt. 24 : 29 and Rev. 6 : 13, neither of which, however, is to be regarded either as a repetition or an explanation of the one before us. A.—God's terrible judgments upon the nations of men, sweeping them away into the gulf of doom, are thought of as changing the face of the earth, even as rolling up the curtain of the visible heavens and laying it aside would change the whole aspect of the blue concave above us. H. C.

As the centrifugal strength of the sun's arm weakens, ethereal friction clogs the course of earth and the planets, so that they draw nearer in long spirals, and will some time fall into the sun, bringing in the collision a blaze of fire, in which they will melt and be consumed. Of such celestial disappearances, more than one has been observed; a notable instance being that of the star in the Northern Crown, which burst into blaze in 1866. The theories of to-day imply that this is the normal course of things throughout the universe—worlds falling together, to melt and perhaps emerge into new worlds and systems again. All this the Scripture has foretold; Isaiah declaring that "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their hosts shall *fall down*, as the *leaf* falleth from the vine, and as a falling *fig* from the fig-tree;" and Peter, that the "heavens and the earth, which are now, are *reserved unto fire*," that "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall *melt* with *fervent heat*, the earth also; and the works that are therein shall be burned up." "Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for *new heavens* and a *new earth*, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Perhaps we have accounted the words of Revelation too exclusively abstract and figurative, and are summoned by the voice of modern science to notice and apply more confidently and literally the angel's words to John, "These sayings are faithful and true." *J. B. Thomas.*

Every world, whether sun, planet or satellite, has its appointed lifetime. By the arrangement of nature, a certain cycle of conditions must be completed, and the body has then reached a state of cosmical death. Our own planet is in the midst of visible changes, which carry it continually toward some finality which must constitute an end of the present terrestrial order. What we witness of terrestrial changes belongs to the planetary stage of cosmical being; but on a grander scale the other planets, and even the suns in the firmament, reveal the progress of a cycle of events which involves every cosmical body in the visible universe.

The world beneath our feet is growing cold. The time is approaching when no warmth will remain of all that store of heat which once lighted our planet to a state of incandescence. Undoubtedly the loss of the world's inherent heat will exert an important influence on the population which occupy its surface. But a juncture of greater significance will arrive. The waters which belong to the earth percolate

through the rocks and saturate the crust to a certain depth. At that depth the heat of the world's interior is such that water is converted into vapor and returned toward the surface. With progressive cooling and progressive thickening of the cold crust, the volume of water required to fill the pores will continually increase. When the earth is cooled to the centre, the waters of the ocean will not be sufficient to satisfy them. The ocean will be drunk up. A cold crust nine hundred miles thick will absorb all the water belonging to our planet. Indeed, the atmosphere will follow the ocean in progress of retirement into the pores of a cold world, and the time must come when water and air will both be absent from the surface of our globe. Then the earth will have reached a stage which is a *present reality* in the life of our moon; for our satellite gives no sign of air or water, and hangs suspended in the heavens, simply a fossil world, unfolding its "nightly tale" of events impending over the future history of our own world.

What shall prevent the fires of the sun from dying out? Is there any heat so intense or any mass of heated matter so vast that time will not suffice to exhaust its force? The earth was once a sun; the moon was once a sun. The radiation which has reduced them from a solar temperature will bring dimness and feebleness to the powers of the great sun of our system. There is no process known by which the heat and light of the sun are perpetuated. The great source of warmth for the generations of animals and plants must inevitably become exhausted, and the sun will stand "blind and blackening" in the midst of space. Then will winter and midnight reign throughout the solar system. *A. Winchell.*

5. The best explanation is that of Calvin, who refers the expression to the Divine determination and foreknowledge. In the sight of God the sword, although not yet actually used, was already dripping blood. The sword is mentioned as a natural and common though poetical expression for any instrument of vengeance. A.—The imagination of the prophet gives the sword not only life, but a moral sense; the impulses of a righteous retribution. Idumea represents not itself alone—the ancient Edom—but all the malignant, persistent, incorrigible enemies of God and of His earthly kingdom. H. C.—Miserable, forever miserable, are they that have by their sins made themselves the people of God's curse; for the sword of the Lord will infallibly attend the curse of the Lord and execute the sentences of it; and

those whom He curses are cursed indeed. It shall come down to judgment, to execute judgment upon sinners. God's sword of war is always a sword of justice. H.

6. By poetic figure, the sword is here a beast or bird of prey, carnivorous, thirsting for blood, and satiating itself upon its slain. The point to be illustrated is the vastness of the slaughter and the terribleness of the doom visited upon these rebels against God and enemies of His throne. The "Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah," in the sense of a vast slaughter. Bozrah is equivalent to Idumea, one of its great cities representing the whole country. H. C.

9. This verse, as Calvin well observes, announces nothing new, but repeats the same prediction under other figures, borrowed from the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, which throughout the Bible are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire (Jude 7). A.

9, 10. In this description, the language is obviously drawn from the case of the doomed cities of the plain, and is therefore figurative. The results—the country lying waste from generation to generation and no traveller passing through it forever—have been wonderfully verified for many ages past and are so still. It would not be easy to find on the face of our globe a spot ever inhabited by man that is now so utterly desolate as this same Idumea, or one as to which there is so much testimony to show that for ages "no man has passed through it." The latter fact is more remarkable because when Isaiah wrote and for some centuries subsequently its capital, Petra, was a great thoroughfare of travel and of commerce. The desolate land of Edom is a standing witness at this day, not merely of the truth and accuracy of this prophecy, but of the fearfulness of the doom which God visits upon the nation that distinguishes itself by its hostility to His own people, and in a yet broader sense, of the fearfulness of that final doom which awaits every persistent rebel in the world of retribution.

12. In harmony with the context which represents the land as utterly void of men and peopled only with such animals as dwell in the most dismal solitudes, this verse must be taken as a way of saying, not that there was an actual call from the people to their princes to assume the reins of government, but that there was neither government, princes nor people to call them.

16. This is obviously addressed to those who should live in the distant future and could compare the prophecy with its fulfilment. The prophet invites them to this comparison. As-

suming that his own prophetic writings—this prophecy against Edom among the rest—are in "the Book of the Lord," he calls upon men in the remote ages to look up this prophecy and read it. H. C.

We have here a striking witness to the high early estimation and sacred authority of the Old Testament Scriptures. Birks.—"The Book" may be this particular prophecy or the entire Scripture, without material change of sense. A.

There are traces in Isaiah of the existence in his time of a "Book of the Lord," which was to be studied for its authoritative teaching, which in a future day (29 : 18) should be understood even better than it was then, which waited therefore for the fullness of its meaning, which was consequently prophetic in its character. And a like reference is made again to the same Book in a previous verse (29 : 11). It may be a matter of question whether the prophet in either case is speaking of his own book, as he certainly does in chap. 30 : 8, and probably in chap. 8 : 1, but there is no doubt as to the character he assigns to it, whether it be his own or the book of the law. There is here an indication of consciousness, on the part of the writer, of a work being then in process of formation, if not in a condition of completeness, to which men might appeal as to an ultimate authority, on account of its being somehow endowed with the Divine sanction. Leathes.

Seek ye the Book of the Lord, and read. Attested incontrovertibly by three distinct sources of proof—its wonderful origin and contents, the complete adaptation of its truths to every spiritual need of man, and its actual effects upon communities and individuals—the Bible presents itself as the utterance of God to man, demanding for its sublime disclosures man's closest inspection, his most earnest, profound and habitual study. In these indisputable facts, upon which its claim is based, we find transcendent reasons why it should be thoroughly searched, why its truths and promises should be deeply pondered and personally appropriated by every soul to whom it speaks. The fact cannot be too often considered that all individual advancement in the Divine life, all legitimate acquisition, all healthful, permanent, spiritual progress and all Christian activity and efficiency are based of necessity upon the personal study, apprehension and application of these Divine truths ; of necessity, because in these truths alone are found the grounds, the means and the motives of Christian faith, and hope, and love, of prayer and effort. B.

The Christian holds his Bible in a warm and sacred reverence. When he opens it he experiences a sense of pleasure; when he reads it, it is with a sense of satisfaction which rises to a mild exhilaration. It is delightful to him. He loves it, and a profane or critical hand laid upon it gives him pain. There is one element of worship in this feeling—viz., reverence. But a moment's examination will show him that this is not reverence for the Book, but for God. It is God's voice that reaches him through its pages, and he is thus brought into the Divine presence. The Bible is desired, revered, loved and cherished because it gratifies spiritual hunger. It is food for the soul. It is usually read as a preparation for prayer. It gives strength and elevation to the spiritual impulses and aspirations, increases confidence and faith in God, makes the soul stronger every way. The Christian who neglects to read his Bible soon finds himself becoming spiritually weak, despondent, irresolute, beset with all the symptoms of exhaustion. The minister who expounds the Scriptures to his people is said to "break the bread of life" to them, and the aptness of this metaphor, as setting forth the reality, is universally recognized. The people go away from the sermon with a feeling of refreshment. They have been fed and made strong for the duties and responsibilities, and filled with fortitude against the ills and sorrows of life. Now nothing is more natural than that we should come to love the Book as a book, and even to love a particular copy of the Book, because of associations which have, in the course of time, clustered around it. But this is not bibliolatry—there is no element of idolatry in it. *Interior.*

"Other things pertain," says Cicero, "to times, and ages, and places, but books instruct youth, delight age, adorn prosperity, afford solace and relief to adversity, give pleasure at home, and do not burden abroad, they lodge with us, they travel with us, they rusticate with us." With what force may all this be applied to the Book of God! This *portable* revelation may be the companion of all men, at all times, to all places. Instead of being confined, like the Sibylline Books, at the Roman capital, in a chest of gold, under an official custodian, every mariner may take it with him when he goes forth upon the sea; the traveller, far removed from the sound of the Sabbath bell and the voice of the living ministry, carries this wherever he goes; the emigrant, departing from his native land, is not separated from the revelation of God; it is in the hands of the child at school, of the old man at the head-springs of wisdom, the soldier takes it into camp and battle, the collier bears it down with him into the depths of the earth, and the prisoner, deprived of all human society, is not so lonely and forlorn as to be without this inspiration of the Almighty. We cannot conceive now of any circumstances so deplorable, no distance so great, no solitude so complete, in which this written revelation of God may not be accessible and available. *W. Adams.*

After many years spent in studying the Bible, and in teaching it both to the adult and the young, I find it hard to say how deeply I am impressed with the conviction that, to fairly master any one portion of Scripture, however small, is, for educational purposes, worth infinitely more than the widest desultory reading. *A. M.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XXXV.

35 : 1 THE wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad ; and the desert shall rejoice, 2 and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing ; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon : they shall see the glory of the LORD, the excellency of our God.

3, 4 Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not : behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *with* the 5 recompence of God ; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, 6 and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing : for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams 7 in the desert. And the glowing sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water : in the habitation of jackals, where they lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. 8 And an high way shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness ; the unclean shall not pass over it ; but it shall be for those : the wayfaring men, yea fools, shall 9 not err *therein*. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up thereon, they shall 10 not be found there ; but the redeemed shall walk *there* : and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion ; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads : they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

CLOSE OF THE EARLIER VISIONS.

THE earlier visions of Isaiah (chaps. 1-35), in their three distinct series, point throughout to the approaching crisis of Assyrian conquest, and to the deliverance of Jerusalem by the sudden overthrow of the invading host. Already, in chap. 2, a day of solemn visitation is announced against all the splendor and beauty of the land of promise. In chap. 5 the invading power is more clearly foreshown, and summoned by the voice of God Himself from a distant land, to execute His judgment. In chaps. 7-12 the warning grows more distinct, being prefaced by the promise of Immanuel, the heir of David's throne, whose kingdom should never fail. The invasion is to be a flood, reaching to the neck ; and Zion alone, the head, would escape from the wide-reaching desolation. The Assyrian would reach the heights on the north of Jerusalem, and threaten it with captivity, but then be suddenly cut down ; and the vista closes with a picture of Messiah's happy reign.

The burdens begin with one on Babylon, to be last fulfilled. Then follow judgments to be inflicted by Assyria, the rod of God's anger, on Philistia, Moab, Syria, Ephraim, Egypt and Ethiopia, and the Arabian tribes ; and then on Samaria and the northern kingdom, with a promise of Jerusalem's deliverance through her recovery from sensual blindness to faith in the God of Israel. The last burden on Tyre reaches onward to the times of Nebuchadnezzar and

Cyrus ; and the series closes with a general warning, and renewed promises of the good things to come.

The woes, dating from the first years of Hezekiah, first denounce the speedy downfall of Samaria, the utter failure of the worldly hopes of the scornful in Judah, and the investment of Jerusalem by the alien armies ; and then reveal, more clearly than before, the overthrow of the Assyrian spoiler by the hand of God.

Chap. 35 : 1, 2 describes the joy of Israel's final recovery. The next verses announce that coming of Messiah which was to precede, and through which alone their recovery could be fulfilled. The rest of the chapter unfolds the blessings that are to follow, or the glorious reign of the promised Immanuel, the Prince of Peace. There seems no reason for confining the words in the opening verse to Palestine, and the absence of the article justifies us in giving them the widest sense. Everywhere, except in that doomed region of judgment, the wildernesses are to rejoice. The creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8 : 21).

The four chapters of history (36-39) are the natural sequel of these prophecies, and the preparation for the later visions that follow. They occur also in 2 K. 18-20, with a few slight variations, and the omission of the writing of Hezekiah. But there are many internal signs

that their original place is in this Book of Isaiah. The changes in the Book of Kings consist chiefly in the replacement of more dramatic by simply historical expressions, as in chap. 39:2, "was glad of them" becomes "hearkened to them." Also the historical order is restored in the last verses of chap. 38, with other alterations suited to a book of simple history. Their connection with the structure of the whole book is most intimate and vital. The earlier prophecies all converge on that coming Assyrian overthrow, of which chaps. 36, 37 are the historical record; while the illness and recovery of Hezekiah (chap. 38) marks the transition from times of peril and danger to a gracious reprieve in years of peace and truth. Lastly, the message of Merodach, king of Babylon (chap. 39), and the weakness of Hezekiah, occasion a warning of that future captivity, from which all the later prophecies diverge; passing onward into a prediction of the days of Cyrus, the times of Messiah, and the full and final deliverance of Zion from her long sorrows. *Birka.*

Chap. 35. As said in the introduction to chap. 34, this chapter stands over against that; this giving the joyful changes which God achieves for His people; that, the woeful changes of ruin and desolation which God brings upon His incorrigible enemies. The central idea of this chapter is the wealth of God's resources for blessing those who trust in Him, and the consequent richness and glory of those blessings. The change wrought in those who find mercy and rest in God is like that of a barren and waste wilderness becoming verdant and blooming; the blind restored to sight; the deaf to hearing; the lame to leaping and the dumb to songs again; sandy deserts bursting forth with bubbling fountains; a glorious highway for Zion's pilgrims over what was only a waste of pathless sands before, upon which highway no dangerous beasts should ever ascend—none but God's redeemed, and they, with songs and everlasting joy. It has been well said that the tenor of this description is so general and comprehensive that it may be applied to Israel returning from her long captivity in Babylon; to the calling of the Gentiles and to their great joy in the Gospel; to the Christian dispensation as revealing more richly than ever before the love of God and the power of His Spirit; to the experience of every true convert to Christ; and to the perfect bliss of heaven. II. C.

A great and glorious change is here described under the figure of a desert clothed with luxuriant vegetation (verses 1, 2). The people are

encouraged with the prospect of this change and with the promise of avenging judgments on their enemies (verses 3, 4). The same change is then expressed, by a change of figure, as a healing of corporeal infirmities (verses 5, 6). The former figure is again resumed, and the wilderness described as free from all its wonted inconveniences, particularly those of barrenness and thirst, disappointment and illusion, pathlessness and beasts of prey (verses 7-9). The whole prediction winds up with a promise of redemption, restoration and endless blessedness (verse 10).

The best description of the chapter is that given by Augusti in the title to his version of it, where he represents it as the description of a happy condition of the Church after a period of suffering. This is no doubt its true import, and when thus explained it may be considered as including various particulars, none of which can be regarded as its specific or exclusive subject. Without any change of its essential meaning it may be applied to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon, to the vocation of the Gentiles, to the whole Christian dispensation, to the course of every individual believer, and to the blessedness of heaven. The ground of this manifold application is not that the language of the passage is unmeaning or indefinite, but that there is a real and designed analogy between the various changes mentioned which brings them all within the natural scope of the same inspired inscription. A.

2. "It" (the wilderness) "shall blossom abundantly." The imagination of the poet gives life and emotion to this desert—late a waste; now all verdant and beautiful—for it now rejoices even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon (not *shall be*, but) *has been* given to it; and herein lies this surprising change. All shall see the manifestations of God's glory; His power to save and the infinite love of His heart, out of which all salvation flows. H. C.

3. With the prospect of this glorious change the people are commanded to encourage themselves and one another. The hands and knees are here combined, as Vitringa observes, to express the powers of action and endurance. The participial forms represent the hands as actually hanging down, relaxed or weakened, and the knees as actually giving way. The passage thus explained is far more expressive as denoting a permanent quality or habitual condition. In itself the language of this verse is applicable either to self-encouragement or to the consolation of others. There is no reason why

the words should not be taken in their widest sense, as meaning, let despondency be exchanged for hope. That self-encouragement is not excluded may be learned from Paul's use of the words in that sense (Heb. 12:12). That mutual encouragement is not excluded is sufficiently apparent from the following verse.

4. This verse shows how the command in the one before it is to be obeyed, by suggesting, as topics of mutual encouragement, the vindictory justice of God, and His certain interposition in behalf of His people. The words are really a promise of deliverance to God's people, and include the *unspeakable gift* of Christ and His salvation. A.—Let the saints have patience and never fear lest God should forget His words of promise or the interests of His people and kingdom. He will vindicate Himself as true to His words, both of threatening against His foes and of promise in behalf of His friends. H. C.

He will come and save. There was a solemn refrain, echoing alike from the Adamic and Abrahamic promises, caught up in the dying blessings of Jacob and of Moses, and repeated like the subtle motive of a fugue through all cadences of the statutes for sacrifices, festivals and Sabbaths. He will come—the Seed, the Shiloh, the Prophet will come. He will gather all nations to fellowship with Israel. Israel shall spread His blessedness over all lands. He will remove every curse and govern the world in righteousness and love. He will provide a sacrifice suited in character and occasion for all the earth and all the nations. *Grey.*

5, 6. The change in the condition of the people is now represented by another figure, the removal of corporeal infirmities. The reason assigned in this last clause for the joy to be expressed shows clearly that the miraculous removal of disease and the miraculous irrigation of the desert are intended to express one and the same thing. The essential idea in both cases is that of sudden and extraordinary change. To the question whether this prediction is in no sense applicable to our Saviour's miracles, we may reply with Calvin, that although they are not directly mentioned, they were really an emblem and example of the great change which is here described. So too the spiritual cures effected by the Gospel, although not specifically signified by these words, are included in the glorious revolution which they do denote. The simple meaning of the passage is that the Divine interposition which had just been promised should produce as wonderful a change in the condition of mankind as

if the blind were to receive their sight, the dumb to speak, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, and deserts to be fertilized and blossom as the rose. In the process of this mighty transmutation miracles were really performed, both of a bodily and spiritual nature, but the great change which includes these includes vastly more. A.

There must be nobler things in store for that race with which the Son of God is contented to have such patience. If the great Husbandman waits so long for the feeble, springing blade, how precious must the full harvest be! There will be plentiful stores of pure wisdom for the world and boundless treasures for each immortal soul that covets truth. There are ages for the world to learn in and an eternity for the individual; and when the soul is able to bear full light, how many things will the great Teacher have to disclose! What secrets in providence and grace shall be uncovered—what blank deserts on the map of knowledge filled up with rich discoveries—what pauses and silences in the speech of Christ, replaced by matter of adoring wonder and praise! We shall find out why we can get no answer to many questions now. Where we are compelled to stand in awe before mysteries which stretch away like trackless wastes, we shall advance and see proofs of larger wisdom and deeper love than it entered our hearts to conceive. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing, for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." We shall drink at the fountain-head of illumination, see light in God's light, and find it all the sweeter that it comes from Him into whose lips grace is poured. *Ker.*

7. The idea of complete and joyful change is still expressed by the transformation of a desert and the consequent removal of its inconveniences, among which the prophet here particularly mentions the tantalizing illusions to which travellers in the wilderness are subject. A.—**Glowing sand.** Refers to a certain illusive appearance of water far in the distance over the desert sands which has often tantalized thirsty travellers, only to aggravate their disappointment. It is best known by the French name of "*the mirage*," and is occasioned by the peculiar refraction of the sun's rays passing over the sands of the desert, giving the distant horizon precisely the appearance of a vast lake. Hence the meaning here is that this deceitful mirage shall become really a pool of water, and

bubbling springs shall burst forth in the very desert—which in that climate would clothe the regions otherwise wasted and desolate, with magnificent verdure and beauty.

8. A new figure still appears. We have seen the great Sahara, putting on the glory of Lebanon, Carmel and Sharon; her desolate and scorching sands blooming with roses and even pouring forth her new joy in song; the mirage becoming pools of living water; moisture and consequent verdure succeeding to sterility and vast desolation; but here this trackless desert and its vast waste of drifting, pathless sands is cut by a *highway*—a road well cast up and fitted for rapid and easy travel. It shall be called—*i.e.*, shall really *be*, the way of holiness, a new road made to bear men safely, high above the quicksands of temptation and the dreary wastes of sin. The unclean go not there. The clause, “It shall be for those,” with this construction, means, It shall be for the people of God alone for whom it was built. H. C.—The precise import of the original expression seems to be that the highway shall belong exclusively to them for whose sake it was made, for whose use it was intended. A.—The last clause means that travellers, even though of only ordinary intelligence, shall not miss the road. With honest hearts, though of only very moderate knowledge, this highway is very readily followed. The way of salvation is travelled safely by some who are only babes and children in understanding. H. C.

The distinctive features of revealed truth are presented so clearly that “the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err” regarding them. They are like lines of light running through the Bible, illuminating all, and explaining all. No man who is willing to give to the interests of his deathless spirit a tithe even of the attention which he knows they justly demand need remain in doubt about the revelations of the Bible concerning the essentials of vital godliness, nor commit a mistake as to the method it discloses for securing everlasting life. E. M.

9. The wilderness, though no longer barren or pathless, might still be the resort of beasts of prey. The promised highway might itself be exposed to their incursions. But immunity from this inconvenience is here promised. A.—God provides against all dangers. There shall be nothing there to hurt or destroy. This blessed pathway is reserved for the redeemed alone and is made safe for them against all evil. H. C.

10. The whole series of promises is here summed up in that of restoration and complete

redemption. A.—Those who are purchased with redeeming blood, bought off from their bondage to sin by a redemption as of captives, shall return from their captivity and come even to Zion, the very abode of the living God. H. C.—The highway before described not only leads to Zion the Church below, but to the Zion above, to the heavenly glory; and all the redeemed, all that walk in this way, shall come thither; at death their souls return to God that gave them, and in the resurrection their bodies shall return from their dusty beds and appear before God in Zion. *Gill.*

When they shall “enter into the joy of their Lord,” it shall be what the joys of this world never could be, everlasting joy, without mixture, interruption or period; it shall not only fill their hearts, to their own perfect and perpetual satisfaction, but it shall be upon their heads, as an ornament of grace and a crown of glory, as a garland worn in token of victory; their joy shall be visible, and no longer a secret thing, as it is here in this world; it shall be proclaimed, to the glory of God and their mutual encouragement; they shall then obtain the joy and gladness which they could never expect on this side heaven; “and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” forever, as the shadows of the night before the rising sun. Thus these prophecies which relate to the Assyrian invasion conclude, for the support of the people of God under that calamity and to direct their joy, in their deliverance from it, to something higher. Our joyful hopes and prospects of eternal life should swallow up both all the sorrows and all the joys of this present time. H.—That redemption complete, there will be no second apostasy. The perpetuity of restored humanity is guaranteed by a special decree of the Almighty. No tempter will be permitted to enter the celestial Paradise. Well may they exult who come home to the heavenly Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. Members of His body who sitteth upon the throne, oft as they turn a grateful eye to Him they are reminded of the perpetuity of their new life. Long as Christ lives they shall live *with Him and in Him*. No cloud obscures the prospects of futurity. The life which Christ restores is secured beyond the reach of power, and accident, and apostasy, and peril. It is a life of joy, without the possibility of falling away and without an end; for the well-spring of it is not our personal obedience, but the life of the Redeemer, the very life of God. *W. Adams.*

O eternal kingdom, kingdom of all ages,

where is light that fails not, and the peace of God that passeth all understanding ; wherein the souls of the saints are at rest, and " everlasting joy is on their heads ; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away ! " O how glorious is the kingdom in which all Thy saints, O Lord, reign with Thee, clothed with light as with a garment, having crowns of precious stones on their heads ! O kingdom of everlasting bliss, where Thou, O Lord, the hope of the saints, and their diadem of glory, art seen face to face by the saints, gladdening them on all sides with that peace of Thine which passeth all understanding ! There is joy without end, gladness without sorrow, health without pain, life without toil, light without darkness, life without death, all good without any evil. There youth never grows old, there life knows no end ; where beauty never grows pale, and love never grows lukewarm, and health never decays, and joy never decreases, and pain is never felt, and gladness is ever retained, and no evil is dreaded ; for there the supreme good is enjoyed, which is to seek forever the face of the Lord of hosts. Happy then are they who have already succeeded in coming home from the shipwrecks of this present life to such great joys. O our country, O country of safety, we behold thee from afar ; from this sea we greet thee, from this valley we sigh after thee ; and we strive with tears, if haply we may reach thee. O hope of mankind, Christ, God of God, our refuge and strength, whose light, beaming from afar amid the dark mists over the tempestuous sea, like the ray of a star of the sea shines brightly before us, that we may be guided to the harbor ; steer our bark, O Lord, with Thine own right hand, by the rudder of Thy cross, let us not perish in the billows, let not the raging water drown us, nor the deep swallow us up ; but by the power of Thy cross draw us from this sea to Thyself, our only consolation, whom we can scarcely discern through our tears, from afar off, as the morning star and the sun of righteousness, awaiting us on the shore of the heavenly country. Lo, we cry aloud unto Thee, we, Thy redeemed, but now also Thy banished ones, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood. " Hear us, O God of our salvation, hope of all the ends of the earth, and of those in the sea afar ; " wild is the sea through which we are faring onward ; Thou art standing on the shore, and looking on our dangers ; save us for Thy name's sake. *Augustine.*

In the illumination of eternity, redemption will be seen as the great end and unity of all

things human, the key of history, the harmony of events, the beginning and the ending of this world's life. Then shall we attach new meaning to the august titles of our Lord—the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the King of kings and Lord of lords—for of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever ! Amen. *W. Adams.*

The field of Messiah's operations is the world ; nor will He cease to put forth His power for the extension of His Church till He has made the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. The outward ordinances of visible Christianity shall be universally spread abroad ; efficacy shall be given to the means of grace, by the outpouring of the Spirit ; and every obstruction to the triumphant progress of the chariot of salvation shall be effectually removed. Ignorance shall be dispelled before the spreading beams of Gospel light. The evidences of Divine truth shall compel infidelity to hide its head. The delusions of the false prophet shall be dissipated by the drying up of the river Euphrates, that a way may be prepared for the kings of the East. Jewish obstinacy and unbelief shall be broken, and the veil taken from the eyes of that interesting people in reading Moses and the prophets. All the hideous forms of polytheistic paganism shall give way to the one religion of Jesus. The anti-Christian leaven, which has been so extensively diffused, shall be purged out of both churches and nations. Every usurper of the rights and prerogatives of Zion's King shall be pushed from his seat. Every rival kingdom shall be overthrown. The civil and ecclesiastical constitutions of the earth shall be regulated by the infallible standard of God's word ; their office-bearers, of every kind, shall acknowledge the authority of Messiah the Prince ; and the greatest kings on earth shall cast their crowns at His feet. All enemies shall be put under His feet ; and such as resist the melting influence of His grace shall be crushed beneath the iron rod of His power. And at the last, there shall not be a spot on the face of the habitable earth where the true Church of Christ shall not have effected a footing, nor a single tribe of the vast family of man which shall not have felt the meliorating and blissful influence of Christian laws and institutions. *W. Symington.*

We have entire confidence in the ultimate success of the missionary enterprise. Christianity triumphantly surmounted, ages ago, far

greater obstacles than now lie in the way of its progress. Its whole empire has been wrested from the grasp of paganism, as degraded, as inveterate, as stubborn as the forms with which it now contends. Because we believe it the truth of God, revealed for man, and adapted in its form of communication to the nature, faculties and wants of man, we doubt not that man under every mode of culture may be brought to the intelligent reception of its truths, the practice of its duties, and the enjoyment of its hopes. We receive as from Divine inspiration the predictions of the Hebrew seers and of the Christian apostle, which foretell the entire re-

generation of the human family, and cannot but believe that man will yet rewrite in history the brightest pages of prophecy. *N. A. Review.*

This creed of historic Christianity has known eighteen hundred years of battle; it has never known defeat. The Church of God, built on the incarnation and resurrection, and holding from her temple's topmost spire the cross, has seen imperial dominions and hoary superstitions and theologies of error, and ten thousand airy speculations disappear, while she steadily expands her sheltering walls and shining gates to encompass all nations. *J. H. Barrows.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTERS XXXVI.-XXXIX.

THESE historical chapters, which conclude the earlier prophecies of Isaiah, are embodied in the history of Hezekiah's reign, Vol. VII., pp. 343-371. B.

The next four chapters contain a historical appendix to the first part of Isaiah's prophecies, relating chiefly to Sennacherib's invasion and the slaughter of his host, to Hezekiah's sickness and miraculous recovery, and to the friendly intercourse between him and the king of Babylon. The same narrative is found substantially in the Second Book of Kings (chaps. 18-20), and a different account of the same matters in the Second Book of Chronicles (chap. 32). It may safely be inferred, as a legitimate if not

an unavoidable deduction, that these chapters form a continuous, unbroken narrative by one and the same writer; that this writer may as well have been Isaiah as any other person, if we regard internal evidence, and can have been no other, if we regard the immemorial tradition of the Hebrew canon; and that these four chapters, far from having been inserted here at random or through ignorance, are in their proper place, as a connecting link between the earlier and later prophecies, the threatening in chap. 39:6 being really the theme or text of the long prophetic discourse, with which the remainder of the book is occupied. A.

CONCLUSION OF THE EARLIER PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH.

THE LATER PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH.

CHAPTERS XL.-LXVI.

THE last twenty-seven chapters form a prophecy, whose coherence of structure and unity of authorship are generally admitted even by those who deny that it was written by Isaiah. The point of time and situation from which the prophet here speaks is for the most part that of the captivity in Babylon (compare, *e.g.*, 64 : 10, 11). But this is adopted on a principle which appears to characterize "vision"—viz., that the prophet sees the future as if present. This second part falls into three sections, each, as it happens, consisting of nine chapters; the two first end with the *refrain*, "There is no peace, saith Jehovah (*or* 'my God'), to the wicked;" and the third with the same thought amplified. The *first* section (chaps. 40-48) has for its main topic the comforting assurance of the deliverance from Babylon by Cyrus, who is even named twice (41 : 2, 3, 25 ; 44 : 28 ; 45 : 1-4, 13 ; 46 : 11 ; 48 : 14, 15). It is characteristic of sacred prophecy in general that the "vision" of a great deliverance leads the seer to glance at the great deliverance to come through Jesus Christ. This principle of association prevails in the second part taken as a whole; but in the first section, taken apart, it appears as yet imperfectly. The *second* section (chaps. 49-57) is distinguished from the first by several features. The person of Cyrus, as well as his name and the specification of Babylon, disappear altogether. Return from exile is indeed repeatedly spoken of and at length (49 : 9-26 ; 51 : 9-52 : 12 ; 55 : 12, 13 ; 57 : 14) ; but in such general terms as admit of being applied to the spiritual and Messianic, as well as to the literal restoration. In the *third* section (chaps. 58-66), as Cyrus nowhere appears, so neither does "Jehovah's servant" occur so frequently to view as in the second. The only delineation of the latter is in chap. 61 : 1-3 and in chap. 63 : 1-6, 9. He no longer appears as suffering, but only as saving and avenging Zion. The section is mainly occupied with various practical exhortations founded upon the views of the future already set forth. *Dic. B.*

In these later prophecies, the continuity of subject is remarkable, there being one main course of thought throughout the entire portion. Its central points are, God, the strength and comfort of His people, infinitely surpassing the gods of the heathen in both prescience and power; His people of the Jews, the faithful few among the many faithless, with their Messiah; all in some general respects servants of Jehovah, and the Messiah specially and permanently so; their work, trials and successes; the Gospel age, its nature, its mission, its triumphs, the calling of the Gentiles and the victories of truth in all the earth; the rejection of the unbelieving Jews and their exemplary doom. H. C.

The form in which the prophecy begins has been determined by its intimate connection with the threatening in the thirty-ninth chapter. To assure the Israel of God, or true Church, that the national judgments which had been denounced should not destroy it, is the prophet's purpose in the fortieth chapter, and is executed by exhibiting Jehovah's power, and willingness, and fixed determination to protect and save His own elect. In the forty-first, His power and omniscience are contrasted with the impotence of idols, and illustrated by an individual example. In the forty-second, the person of the great Deliverer is introduced, the nature of His influence described, the relation of His people to Himself defined, and their mission or vocation as enlighteners of the world explained. The forty-third completes this exposition by exhibiting the true design of Israel's election as a people, its entire independence of all merit in themselves, and sole dependence on the sovereign will of God. In the forty-fourth the argument against idolatry is amplified and urged, and the Divine sufficiency and faithfulness exemplified by a historical allusion to the exodus from Egypt, and a prophetic one to the deliverance from Babylon, in which last Cyrus is expressly named. The last part of this chapter should have been connect-

ed with the first part of the forty-fifth, in which the name of Cyrus is repeated, and his conquests represented as an effect of God's omnipotence, and the prediction as a proof of His omniscience, both which attributes are then again contrasted with the impotence and senselessness of idols. The same comparison is still continued in the forty-sixth, with special reference to the false gods of Babylon, as utterly unable to deliver either their worshippers or themselves. In the forty-seventh the description is extended to the Babylonian government, as wholly powerless in opposition to Jehovah's interference for the emancipation of His people. The forty-eighth contains the winding up of this great argument from Cyrus and the fall of Babylon, as a conviction and rebuke to the unbelieving Jews themselves. The fact that Babylon is expressly mentioned only in these chapters is a strong confirmation of our previous conclusion that it is not the main subject of the prophecy. By a natural transition he reverts in the forty-ninth to the true Israel, and shows the groundlessness of their misgivings, by disclosing God's design respecting them, and showing the certainty of its fulfilment notwithstanding all discouraging appearances. The difference in the character and fate of the two Israels is still more exactly defined in the fiftieth chapter. In the fifty-first the true relation of the chosen people both to God and to the Gentiles is illustrated by historical examples—the calling of Abram and the exodus from Egypt, and the same power pledged for the safety of Israel in time to come. In the last part of this chapter and the first of the fifty-second, which cohere in the most intimate manner, the gracious purposes of God are represented as fulfilled already, and described in the most animating terms. This view of the future condition of the Church could not be separated long from that of Him by whom it was to be effected; and accordingly the last part of this chapter, forming one unbroken context with the fifty-third, exhibits Him anew, no longer as a teacher, but as the great sacrifice for sin. No sooner is this great work finished than the best days of the Church begin, the loss of national distinction being really a prelude to her glorious emancipation. The promise of this great change in the fifty-fourth chapter is followed in the fifty-fifth by a gracious invitation to the whole world to partake of it. The fifty-sixth continues the same subject, by predicting the entire abrogation of all local, personal and national distinctions. Having dwelt so long upon the prospects of the

spiritual Israel or true Church, the prophet, in the last part of the fifty-sixth and the first part of the fifty-seventh, looks back at the carnal Israel, as it was in the days of its idolatrous apostasy, and closes with a threatening which insensibly melts into a promise of salvation to the true Israel. The fifty-eighth again presents the carnal Israel, not as idolaters, but as hypocrites, and points out the true mean between the rejection of appointed rites and the abuse of them. The fifty-ninth explains Jehovah's dealings with the nation of the Jews, and shows that their rejection was the fruit of their own doings, as the salvation of the saved was that of God's omnipotent compassions. In the sixtieth he turns once more to the true Israel, and begins a series of magnificent descriptions of the new dispensation as a whole, contrasted with the imperfections and restrictions of the old. The prominent figures of the picture in this chapter are immense increase by the accession of the Gentiles, and internal purity and peace. The prominent figure in the sixty-first is that of the Messiah as the agent in this great work of spiritual emancipation. In the sixty-second it is that of Zion, or the Church herself, in the most intimate union with Jehovah and the full fruition of His favor. But this anticipation is inseparably blended with that of vengeance on the enemies of God, which is accordingly presented in the sublime vision of the sixty-third chapter, followed by an appeal to God's former dealings with His people, as a proof that their rejection was their own fault, and that He will still protect the true believers. These are represented in the sixty-fourth as humbly confessing their own sins and suing for the favor of Jehovah. In the sixty-fifth he solemnly announces the adoption of the Gentiles and the rejection of the carnal Israel because of their iniquities, among which idolatry is once more rendered prominent. He then contrasts the doom of the apostate Israel with the glorious destiny awaiting the true Israel. And this comparison is still continued in the sixty-sixth chapter, where the prophet, after ranging through so wide a field of vision, seems at last to fix his own eye and his reader's on the dividing line or turning point between the old and new economy, and winds up the whole drama with a vivid exhibition of the nations gathered to Jerusalem for worship, while the children of the kingdom—*i.e.*, Israel according to the flesh, are cast forth into outer darkness, where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched. Upon this awful spectacle the curtain falls, and we are left to find re-

lief from its impressions in the merciful disclosures of a later and more cheering revelation.

J. A. Alexander.

Isaiah, in the close of the previous part of the prophecies (39:7), had distinctly announced that the nation should be carried to Babylon. He saw that this was inevitable, and that the crimes of the monarch and of the nation were such as would certainly hasten this result. He had retired from the public functions of the prophetic office, and given himself up to the contemplation of happier and purer times. He therefore devoted himself to the task of furnishing consolation for the pious portion of the nation, and especially of recording prophetic descriptions which should comfort the Jews when they should be held in their long captivity in Babylon. We have seen (notes on chaps. 13 and 14) that Isaiah had before this laid the foundation for these consolations by the assurance that Babylon and its mighty power should be entirely destroyed, and, of course, that the Jewish people could not be held *always* in bondage there. In this part of the prophecy (chaps. 40-66) his object is to give more full and specific consolations. He therefore places himself in vision in the midst of the future scenes which he describes, and states distinctly and fully the grounds of consolation. These topics of consolation would arise from two sources—both of which he presents at great length and with great beauty. The first is, that the nation should be delivered from its long and painful captivity. This was the *primary* thing to be done, and this was needful in order to furnish to them consolation. He places himself in that future time. He sees his own nation borne to a distant land, according to his own predictions; sees them sighing in their hard bondage; sees the city and the Temple where they once worshipped the God of their fathers laid in ruins, and all their pleasant things laid waste (64:11); and the people dispirited and sad in their long and painful captivity. He predicts the close of that captivity, and speaks of it as present to his view. He consoles the people by the assurance that it was coming to an end; names the monarch—Cyrus—by whom their oppressors were to be punished, and by whom they were to be restored to their own land; and describes in the most beautiful and glowing imagery their certain return. The second source of consolation is that which relates to the coming of a far more important deliverer than Cyrus, and to a far more important deliverance than that from the captivity at Babylon. By the laws of pro-

phetic suggestion, and in accordance with the usual manner of Isaiah, his mind is carried forward to much more momentous events. His thoughts glide easily to the Messiah; and any event which bears a *resemblance* to His coming suggests His work, His character and the benefit of His advent, and the descriptions of the prophet insensibly change from the immediate subject under contemplation to the far more important events connected with His work. This was the common rule by which the mind of Isaiah acted; and it is no wonder, therefore, that an event so strikingly resembling the deliverance of man from the bondage of sin by the Messiah as was the deliverance from the captivity of Babylon should have been suggested by that, and that his thoughts should pass rapidly from one to the other, and the one be forgotten in the other. The eye of the prophet, therefore, glances rapidly from the object more immediately in view in the future, to the object more remote; and he regards the deliverance from the Babylonish captivity as introductory to a far more important deliverance. In the contemplation of that more distant event, therefore, he becomes wholly absorbed; and from this he derives his main topics of consolation. He sees the future coming of the Messiah; he sees his forerunner; he sees the author of redemption in various scenes—now as a sufferer, humble, poor and persecuted; and now the more distant glories of the Messiah's kingdom rises to view. He sees Him raised up from the dead; he sees His empire extend and spread among the Gentiles; he sees kings and princes from all lands coming to lay their offerings at His feet; he sees the distant tribes of men come bending before Him, and His religion of peace and joy diffusing its blessings around the world. In the contemplation of these future glories, he desires to furnish consolation for his afflicted countrymen in Babylon, and at the same time a demonstration of the truth of the oracles of God, and of the certain prevalence of the true religion, which should impart happiness and peace in all future times. Isaiah was now an old man, and his style and manner of thinking and of utterance would be naturally mellowed by age. His object, also, was not reproof so much as consolation; it was not, as formerly, to denounce judgment, to rebuke kings and nobles for their crimes, and to rouse the nation to a sense of its danger; it was to furnish topics of support to those who were groaning in captivity far from the Temple of their God and from the sepulchres of their fathers. The language of the

second part is more gentle and flowing, more tender and mild. There is exquisite beauty and finish, and occasionally there are bursts of the highest sublimity; but there is not the compression of thought and the struggling for utterance, which there is often in the former part. There, the prophetic impulse is often like waters pent up between projecting rocks and hills, and where it struggles and bursts forth impetuously and irresistibly; in this portion of the prophecy it is like the placid stream—the full-flowing, majestic river—calm, pure, deep and sublime. There are, indeed, characteristics of the same style, and of the same author, but it is in different circumstances, and with a different object in view. The portion which follows (chaps. 40-66) is a *single* prophecy, apparently uttered at one time, and relating to one subject, and having one great design. The former part of his prophecies consists of a number of independent and separate predictions, some of them very brief, and having no immediate connection with each other. Here all is connected; and the same design is kept steadily and constantly in view. His beautiful descriptions roll on, to use one of his own images, “like a river,” or like the “waves of the sea,” and there is an inimitable beauty and majesty in his sentiments and in his style. Almost everything which occurs in the prophecy relates to that which was to be fulfilled long after the time of Isaiah. Occasionally there is a hint, or glance, or slight allusion to the prevalence of idolatry in his own time; but there is no express mention of the events which were then occurring. He does not mention his own circumstances; he does not allude to the name of the monarch who lived when he wrote. He seems to have forgotten the present, and to live and act in the scenes of the distant future. He therefore speaks *as if* he were in the midst of them; he speaks as one living among the exiled Jews in Babylon when their long captivity was about to come to an end; he exhorts, rebukes, administers comforts, as if they were present to his mind, and as if he were directly addressing them. He speaks of the life, sufferings and death of the Messiah also, as if passing before his mind, or as events which he *saw*, and seeks personal consolation and support amid the prevailing crimes and calamities of his own times, in the contemplation of future scenes. *Barnes.*

AUTHORSHIP OF CHAPS. 40-66.

These chapters have formed a part of the collection of Isaiah's prophecies as far back as

the history of the canon can be traced, without the slightest vestige of a different tradition among Jews or Christians as to the author. The tone and spirit of these chapters are precisely such as might have been expected from the circumstances under which they are alleged to have been written, and their variations from the earlier chapters such as must have been expected from the change in the circumstances themselves. A cursory inspection of these later prophecies is enough to satisfy the reader that he has before him neither a concatenated argument nor a mass of fragments, but a continuous discourse in which the same great topics are continually following each other, somewhat modified in form and combination, but essentially the same from the beginning to the end. If these twenty-seven chapters are confessedly the work of one man and indeed a continuous discourse on one great subject, and if a perfectly uniform tradition has attached them to the writings of Isaiah, it remains to be considered whether we have any reason to deny or even to dispute the fact so solemnly attested. All the presumptions are in favor of its truth. For two thousand years, at least, the book was universally regarded as Isaiah's, and no other name has ever been connected with it even by mistake or accident. It is just such a book as the necessities of that age might have been expected to call forth. Its genuineness, therefore, as a writing of Isaiah, is not a fact requiring demonstration by detailed and special proof, but one attested both by its external history and its internal structure, unless positive reasons can be given for rejecting a conclusion which appears not only obvious, but unavoidable. *A.*

The prophecies of Isaiah (chaps. 40-46), which follow the historical episode have been received as genuine, and one main part of Isaiah's writings, by the common faith of Jews and Christians for more than two thousand years. During the last century, however, a school of critics arose in Germany, who ascribe them to one or more unknown writers near the close of the Captivity. So Koppe, Eichhorn, Döderlein, Justi, Paulus, Bauer, Bertholdt, De Wette, Gramberg, Vatke, Rosenmüller, Gesenius, Hitzig, Maurer, Knobel, Ewald, Hendewerk and Umbreit, and others. In some circles the modern theory has even been turned into an axiom, and a test of critical learning. Their authenticity, however, has been upheld in Germany by many able writers; as Hensler, Piper, Beckhaus, Jahn, Dereser, Greve, Möller, Kleinert, Schleier, Hengstenberg, Hävernack and Keil

More recently Stier has vindicated and expounded these chapters in his "Esaías, nicht Pseudo-Esaías," a learned work of a thousand pages. Drechsler, also, in his commentary on the earlier visions, Hahn and Delitzsch in their continuation, and the last in his own complete and able commentary, share the same view, and maintain strongly the organic unity of the whole work. *Birks.*

Attacks have been made by German critics upon the integrity of the whole book, different critics pronouncing different portions of the first part spurious, and many concurring to reject the second part altogether (the last twenty-seven chapters). Defenders of the integrity of the book have not, however, been wanting—*e.g.*, Jahn, Hengstenberg, Möller, Kleinert, Havernick, Stier, Keil, Delitzsch (in *Fbn.*), etc. The circumstance mainly urged by those who gain-say Isaiah's authorship of this second part is the unquestionable fact that the author takes his standpoint at the close of the Babylonish captivity, as if that were his present, and from thence looks forward into his subsequent future. Other grounds which are alleged are confessedly secondary and external, and are really of no great weight. The most important of these is founded upon the difference of style. On the other hand, for the authenticity of the second part the following reasons may be advanced. (a) *Externally.* The unanimous testimony of Jewish and Christian tradition (cf. *Ecclus.* 48:24); the use apparently made of the second part in *Jer.* 10:1-16, verse 25; 25:31; 50, 51; in *Ezek.* 23:40, 41 and *Zeph.* 2:15; 3:10; the decree of Cyrus in *Ezra* 1:2-4, which plainly is founded on *Isa.* 44:28; 45:1, 13; and the evidence of the N. T. quotations (*Matt.* 3:3; *Luke* 4:17; *Acts* 8:28; *Rom.* 10:16, 20). (b) *Internally.* The unity of design which connects these last twenty-seven chapters with the preceding; the oneness of diction which pervades the whole book; the peculiar elevation and grandeur of style which characterize the second part as well as the first; the absence of any other name than Isaiah's claiming the authorship; the claims which the writer makes to the foreknowledge of the deliverance by Cyrus, which claims, on the opposing view, must be fraudulent; lastly, the Messianic predictions which mark its inspiration, and remove the chief ground of objection against its having been written by Isaiah. Ewald thus characterizes Isaiah: "Just as the subject requires, he has readily at command every several kind of style and every several change of delineation; and it is pre-

cisely this that, in point of language, establishes his greatness, as well as in general forms one of his most towering points of excellence. His only fundamental peculiarity is the lofty, majestic calmness of his style. His discourse varies into every complexion; it is tender and stern, dictating and threatening, mourning and again exulting in Divine joy, mocking and earnest; but ever at the right time it returns to its original elevation and repose, and never loses the clear ground-color of its Divine seriousness." In point of style we can find no difficulty in recognizing in the second part the presence of the same plastic genius as we discover in the first. And, altogether, the æsthetic criticism of all the different parts of the book brings us to the conclusion that the whole of the book originated in one mind, and that mind one of the most sublime and variously gifted instruments which the Spirit of God has ever employed to pour forth its voice upon the world. *Die. B.*

The book in its present form can be traced to the time of Ezra, or nearly, and from that time until what from its recency may be called the other day, its Isaianic authorship has been regarded as an established fact. The Hebrew nation, which guarded its Scriptures with an almost superstitious jealousy, ascribed the Book to Isaiah. Our Lord and His apostles never expressed a doubt, and spoke of the prophet Isaiah as the author of passages which they quoted from the second as well as the first part of the book. This historic evidence is corroborated by many considerations which confirm it. He is a bold man who in these circumstances can say that the generation which stood nearest to the origin of the book was mistaken as to its authorship, and that all the generations which followed failed to discover reasons, external or internal, for doubting the belief which had been entertained from the beginning, that Isaiah was the author of the whole book. *Kennedy.*

The last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah form a continuous literary work. This work may perhaps be best described as a didactic poem, a series of sermons in rhythm, full of feeling and poetic fire, though lacking the progressive action which would be essential in an epic or in a drama. The regular rhythm of the poem is stately, occasionally relieved by the insertion of brief lyric pieces, with an entirely different movement. (See, for example, *Isa.* 42:10-12.) The poem has three main divisions, each of them containing three subdivisions, each of which consists of three parts. These twenty-seven parts are quite commonly called cantos, in the

lack of a better term, by the scholars who have written on the Book of Isaiah. The twenty-seven cantos differ somewhat in their limits from the twenty-seven chapters, as the latter are now divided.

Many hold that the poem was written from the point of view of Israel in Babylon, just at the beginning of the conquests of Cyrus. Some of these hold that this point of view was adopted predictively, by inspiration, and others, that the book was written in the time of Cyrus. I cannot accept this opinion. Some parts of the work certainly refer to the period in question—Isa. 44:24-28, and the opening verses of the next chapter, for example. But this is only an occasional mode of representation; the usual mode contemplates Israel as a political power, residing in Jerusalem and the cities of Judah.

These twenty-seven cantos are very much more used in the New Testament than is any other continuous portion of the Old Testament of equal length. Some other sections, the middle chapters of Genesis, for example, or a selected tract of the Psalms, might rival it in the number of citations, but the citations from these chapters of Isaiah are longer and fuller, and the imagery of Isaiah is carried over into the New Testament, to an extent altogether without parallel in these other writings. The name of Isaiah, as a concordance shows, is ten times mentioned in the New Testament, in connection with these twenty-seven chapters; in six of these instances, the words cited are attributed, verbally at least, to the person Isaiah; and in the other four, to the Book of Isaiah. There is no historical testimony, either in the Bible or out of it, to the existence of any great prophet named Isaiah, except the one who lived in the days of Hezekiah. The evidence in the case seems to me to preponderate immensely in favor of the conclusion that the twenty-seven cantos are the literary work of the Isaiah who lived in Hezekiah's time. *W. J. Beecher*. (See Vol. VII., p. 475.)

The earliest hint of any new discovery is commonly ascribed to Koppe, who in a note upon his German edition of Bishop Lowth's work suggests that the fiftieth chapter may have been written by Ezekiel or some other Jew in exile. A similar opinion was expressed about the same time by Döderlein and Eichhorn with respect to the entire latter part of Isaiah. The same hypothesis was then carried out in detail by Justi, and adopted by Bauer, Paulus, Bertholdt and Augusti; so that not long after the beginning of this century it was established as the current doctrine of the Ger-

man schools. This revolution of opinion, though ostensibly the pure result of critical analysis, was closely connected with the growing unbelief in inspiration, and the consequent necessity of explaining away whatever appeared either to demonstrate or involve it. It must also be noted, as a circumstance of great importance in the history of this controversy, that the young theologians of Germany for fifty years were almost as uniformly taught and as constantly accustomed to assume the certainty of this first principle as their fathers had been to assume the contrary. This fact will enable us to estimate at something like their real value the pretensions to superior candor and impartiality advanced by the neological interpreters, and more especially by some of recent date, who are in truth as strongly biassed by the prejudice of education as their immediate predecessors by the love of novelty and passion for discovery.

All that need be added in relation to the arguments against the genuineness of these chapters drawn from their matter or contents, is the general observation that their soundness may be brought to the test by inquiring whether they do not either take for granted something as belonging to the prophecy which is not found there by a simple and natural interpretation, or proceed upon some general false principle, such as the denial of prophetic inspiration as impossible. If either of these flaws is fatal to the argument affected by it, how much more must it be vitiated by the coexistence of the two, which is the case in many minor arguments of this class, and emphatically true of that main argument to which they are auxiliary—viz., that Isaiah cannot be the writer of these chapters on account of their minute and constant reference to the Babylonian exile. The alleged fact and the inference are equally unfounded.

The other main objection to the genuineness of these prophecies is founded not upon their matter, but their manner, or in other words, their diction, phraseology and style, which are said to be entirely unlike those of Isaiah. The rejection of these chapters was not forced upon the critics by a palpable diversity of style and diction, but such diversities were hunted up, laboriously and gradually brought to light, in order to justify the previous rejection. By parity of reasoning it may be foreseen that whoever cannot be convinced of the reality of inspiration will consider these detailed proofs of later date conclusive; while the reader who knows better, or at least has no misgivings

upon that point, will as certainly pronounce them "trifles light as air." If we gain nothing more by this investigation, it is at least satisfactory to know that all depends upon a foregone conclusion, and that as to faith in such things no less than in higher matters, he that hath receiveth, and from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath.

The objection drawn from indefinite diversities of tone and manner, such as a more flowing style and frequent repetitions, is so far from having any force, that the absence of these differences would in the circumstances of the case be well adapted to excite suspicion. In other words, Isaiah writing at a later period of life, and when withdrawn from active labor, with his view directed not to the present or a proximate futurity, but one more distant, and composing not a series of detached discourses, but a continuous, unbroken prophecy, not only may but must have differed from his former self as much as these two parts of the collection differ from each other. This antecedent probability is strengthened by the fact that similar causes have produced a still greater difference in some of the most celebrated writers, ancient and modern, who exhibit vastly more unlikeness to themselves in different parts of their acknowledged writings than the most microscopic criticism has been able to detect between the tone or manner of Isaiah's earlier and later prophecies. *J. A. Alexander.*

And now we come to Isaiah's final prophecy, published by him some years afterward, probably toward the end of the lives of both Hezekiah and himself. In it, leaving the temporal fortunes of Judah far behind, he soars onward and upward to Christ and His kingdom. The criticism of these twenty-seven chapters has been the crux and opprobrium of modern scholarship. It started with the fullest belief in the unity of this wonderful work, a unity evident to the judgment of every attentive reader; but with equal confidence asserted that it was written by some second Isaiah at the close of the Babylonian captivity, when the growing power of Cyrus justified the use of his name in chap. 45 as the probable conqueror of Babylon. But a close comparison between the words and phrases used in the first thirty-nine and the last twenty-seven chapters showed a very extraordinary amount of resemblance. The language of the two portions is even in minute particulars the same; so, too, are the ideas. If this second part described Judea as desolate, such was the most common picture in the first; if it represented Zion as a wilderness,

and God's holy and beautiful house as burned with fire (64: 10, 11), though within a few verses it speaks of city and Temple as if still standing (66: 6), as just before it had described the watchman standing upon the walls of Jerusalem, so had the prophet started with a quotation from Micah, part of which was that Jerusalem was to become heaps of ruins, and the Temple site a desolate mountain-top. But in fact all is ideal, and the desolation of the city and the burning of the Temple refer rather to the times of the Romans, when the lineal Israel was removed that the spiritual Israel might take its place, than to the capture of the city by Nebuchadnezzar.

In fact, in reading it through as modern critics have done to discover by internal evidence proofs of the period when it was written, only two certain facts appear—the first, the mention of Cyrus; the second that the prophecy was written in Judea, and that the people at the time when it was written were given to Moloch worship. This second fact is proved by chap. 57: 5, 6. The Jews are there represented as sacrificing their children to Moloch in dried-up water-courses, the beds of what in the rainy season were rushing streams; for such is the meaning of the word there rendered "valleys." Now there were no such valleys in Babylonia, and no stones worn smooth by torrents, such as are common in Palestine; for the whole region is alluvial, and watered by canals from the Euphrates. Nor is there the slightest proof, but the contrary, that the horrible fanaticism which drove the people to sacrifice their offspring to Moloch in the days of Hezekiah and his successors ever existed among the exiles at Babylon.

Criticism has therefore changed its front, and instead of two portions of Isaiah, one a collection of the most remarkable predictions of his younger days, the other the calm outpouring of his later years, written at a time when he had retired from active life, and was bowed down beneath the load of nearly eighty winters, it now dismembers all Isaiah, and distributes his mangled limbs among a host of prophets known and unknown, extending from Isaiah down to Maccabæan times. Manasseh did but saw him asunder, and this was the sole feat attempted by modern critics at first. Having found this simple process impossible, they now hack him into small pieces. *R. P. Smith.*

The objections against the critical hypothesis may be all reduced to this, that the oblivion of the author's name and history is more inexplicable, not to say incredible, than anything about

the other doctrine can be to a believer in prophetic inspiration. This is a difficulty which no ingenuity has ever yet been able to surmount. That a writer confessedly of the highest genius, living at one of the most critical junctures in the history of Israel, when the word of God began to be precious and prophetic inspiration rare, should have produced such a series of prophecies as this, with such effects upon the exiles and even upon Cyrus as tradition ascribes to them, and then have left them to the admiration of all future ages, without so much as a trace of his own personality about them, is a phenomenon of literary history compared with which the mystery of Junius is as nothing. It would be so even if we had no remains of the same period to compare with these; but how immensely is the improbability enhanced by the fact that the other prophets of the Exile, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah, are not only well known and easily identified, but minutely accurate in the chronological specifications of their prophecies, a feature absolutely wanting in these chapters, though alleged to be the work of a contemporary writer. It is in vain to say, with Ewald, that the suppression of the author's name and the oblivion of his person may be accounted for by the peculiar circumstances of the times, when the other writings of those times still extant not only fail to prove what is alleged, but prove the very opposite.

Even this, however, though sufficiently incredible, is still not all we are required to believe; for we must also grant that these anonymous though admirable writings were attached to those of a prophet who flourished in the preceding century, and with whose productions they are said to have scarcely anything in common, and that this mysterious combination took place so early as to lie beyond the oldest tradition of the Hebrew canon, and was so blindly acquiesced in from the first that not the faintest intimation of another author or another origin was ever heard of for two thousand years, when the Higher Criticism first discovered that the prophecies in question were the work of many authors, and then (no less infallibly) that they were really the work of only one, but (still infallibly) that this one could not be Isaiah!

To this intrinsic want of credibility now add, as positive considerations, the ancient and uniform tradition of the Jews; the testimony of the general title, which must be regarded as inclusive of these chapters, in the absence of all countervailing evidence; the influence ex-

erted by these prophecies, according to Josephus, on Cyrus and the Restoration, implying their antiquity and previous notoriety; the recognition of the whole book as Isaiah's by the Son of Sirach (48:22-25); and the indiscriminate citation of its different parts in the New Testament.

Again, to these external testimonies may be added, as internal proofs, the writer's constant representation of himself as living before some of the events which he describes, and as knowing them by inspiration; his repeated claim to have predicted Cyrus and the Restoration long before the first appearances of those events; the obvious allusions to Jerusalem and Judah as the writer's home, to the Temple and the ritual as still subsisting, and to idolatry as practised by the people, which the Higher Critics can evade only by asserting that the Jews did not cease to be idolaters in Babylon; the historical allusions to the state of the world with which the writer was familiar, precisely similar to those in the genuine Isaiah; the very structure of the prophecies relating to the Exile, clear enough to be distinctly verified, and yet not so minute as a contemporary writer must have made them; and lastly, the identity of Messiah here described with the Messiah of the undisputed prophecies.

If the Higher Critics can find nothing in the arguments alleged against them to make inspiration and prophetic foresight credible, they have certainly done still less to drive us from our position, that Isaiah's having written this book is unspeakably more probable than any other supposition. A.

With regard to Isaiah's authorship there was for nearly eighteen hundred years only one opinion in the Christian Church and the Jewish nation. It was not until men had ceased to believe in Christ that they began to question the latter prophecy of Isaiah. The Buxtorfs, the Carpzovs, Glassius, Gussetius, Cocceius, Vennema, Vitringa, Schultens, Danz, the Michaelis, acquiesced in the judgment of antiquity. Even Paulus says that the diction is as pure as in the other parts of Isaiah. Eichhorn adduced no instances of later language. Bertholdt confesses that there are no traces of later usage. The first, and the great objection still, is that Cyrus is mentioned by name. When men came to teach, either that God could not know beforehand the name of one of His creatures, or if He could He could not or would not communicate it before the existence of that creature, they necessarily thought that the prediction concerning the conqueror of Babylon must

have been written after his appearance. The denial of the genuineness came first, the criticism came after, similar to that famous course of law, which first condemned and executed, and afterward proceeded to trial. Yet the process has led to beneficial results. The Rationalist dogmatic criticism has been subjected to a thorough examination by Hengstenberg, Havernik, Kleinert, Drechsler, Keil and many others. The objections have been fairly met, and the claims of Isaiah to the latter chapters vindicated on various grounds; as, for example, the plain references to those chapters in the books of Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Jeremiah; the circumstances of the times described, so exactly agreeing to the days of Isaiah and not to the close of the Exile; the historical relations; the similarity of style and manner and the peculiarities of diction; the entire tone and coloring, not to mention other evidences external and internal. Indeed, Ewald and Bleek have made a fatal rent in the adverse criticism by confessing that the passage chaps. 56: 9-57: 11 was written before the Exile. "This passage," they say, "may be received with the highest probability as a prophetic oracle uttered before the Exile perhaps by Isaiah himself, certainly when the Jewish nation still existed, as it is only on this supposition that the contents and composition can be understood." . . . It is a singular coincidence that those portions of the Old Testament which are most essential to New Testament theology, as the Pentateuch, Daniel and the latter part of Isaiah, are just those parts which Rationalist criticism has selected as the favorite fields on which to display its skill. Those Messianic predictions which it can explain with plausibility as expressing Jewish hopes of earthly grandeur and prosperity, and incompatible with the teaching of Christ, it pronounces genuine. The prophecies which represent the Son of man as a heavenly judge coming in the clouds of heaven (Dan. 7); the Messiah as cut off (Dan. 9); Zion's King as meek and lowly and riding upon an ass (Zech. 9); the good shepherd sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11); pierced by the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Zech. 13: 10); despised and rejected of men, cut off out of the land of the living, one upon whom the Lord hath laid the iniquities of us all (Isa. 53), are just the predictions which it pronounces to be ungenue. All this is in direct opposition to the teaching of the New Testament, which especially ascribes the whole prophecy of Isaiah to him as the writer, and cites as being fulfilled in our Lord, His sufferings and His salvation. *McCaul.*

We are asked to believe "that a writer of transcendent genius admitted by all competent judges to surpass even the greatest writers among the Hebrews, with the exception alone, if exception it be, of Isaiah, grew up among the exiles in Babylon and attracted to himself, as he must have done, by this remarkable prediction (chaps. 44-66) the attention of all his contemporaries and yet afterward dropped so entirely into oblivion that his very name and memory perished. Yet this is but part of the wonder. We are called upon, in addition, to believe that in the midst of a people banished from their native land and compelled to adopt the dialectic peculiarities of the language of their foreign oppressors—which so mingled with, and finally superseded their own, that their original tongue was all but forgotten (Neh. 8: 7, 8)—a poet was born and brought up who yet attained to such purity of diction and command of the ancient Hebrew as has never been surpassed, if even equalled!" *Forbes.*

There is no ground for attributing these prophecies to two authors. It is the same Isaiah, the same ambassador from God, now hoary and tremulous, yet not soured in temper nor sickened by a life-long ministration among a gainsaying people, but benign and hopeful as always, who sees in the age to come the wide world "blossoming as the rose." On every page there is the same protest for truth, justice and mercy, between man and man; there is the same message of wrath for the oppressor and the cruel, and the same righteous care for the widow, the fatherless, the bondsman, the stranger. On every page there are the same elements of what we acknowledge to be a true theology. *Isaac Taylor.*

The spirit and moral portraiture are identical in both parts of Isaiah. It is full, as no other book of the Old Testament is, of the magnificence of our human hopes, and of the strange and inconceivable ways in which they were to be secured and fulfilled; and it is unrolled before us like the march of some profound and overpowering musical composition, full of all changeful and unexpected movements, strains of sadness and awe interwoven with thrilling joy and piercing tenderness, appeals the most pathetic with bursts of wrath and terror, but all resulting in a whole of incomparable grandeur. But we may also see in it the mirror of the mind of him who was charged with this wonderful disclosure of the counsels and purposes of God. In this awful volume, in which thought and imagination were allowed to master "the vision of the world, and all the

wonder that would be," in which he has embodied all that most concerns mankind for the present and the future, and in which the tremendous severity of judgment mingles so strangely with a gracious and inexpressible sweetness which even still takes us by surprise—through all these public and divinely inspired utterances we may trace, with a fullness and richness and depth unequalled in the Old Testament, the personal lineaments of one who not only by faith and self-discipline, but by thought and knowledge, had become fitted to be a saint of the company of that Redeemer, whose person, whose coming, whose life of suffering and glory he was given to foretell, and in whose perfection man was to be made perfect. *Church.*

Affirmatively, my reasons for holding and maintaining that one and the same Isaiah wrote both the earlier and later prophecies of this book are : 1. *The internal evidence lying in the book itself.* The author's cast of mind, his poetic conceptions, his wonderfully bold, glowing, yet chastened imagination, his manner of predicting future events, his style of poetry and his style as a writer—all combine to identify him as the author of the entire book—of the later as well as the earlier portions. As the world never produced but one Homer and but one Milton, so it never produced but one Isaiah. That two men should appear in history of such transcendent and peculiar genius, towering so high in their line above all other authors, yet so like each other that the great mass of readers see no distinction, and naturally account them the same man, is simply incredible. Even the fact of real prophecy is not more decisively supernatural. For, let it be considered, men of such surpassing genius are always original; are truly Divine creations. No second Isaiah could possibly be a copy of the first—could never be brought out by any supposable amount of effort at imitation. The witness borne by the unsophisticated common sense of the masses is triumphantly decisive. Not one reader in a thousand, in passing from the former portion to the latter, would suspect that he was passing from one author to another. And this may be asserted of the Hebrew reader as well as of the English. In fact the main criteria of authorship are those great salient points of an author's mind which determine his cast of thought and consequently of expression and style, and which are patent to readers of average sagacity. The fact, therefore, that the masses who have read this book have seen no reason to question that one Isaiah wrote the

whole, becomes a valid proof that he did. Again, of the fifteen other Hebrew prophets whose writings have come down to us, not one bears a hundredth part so much resemblance to Isaiah as the author of the later prophecies in this book bears to the author of the earlier. That is, the same Isaiah who wrote the entire book has idiosyncrasies of character and of style which no other Hebrew prophet shares with him—to which no other even approximates. Again, as already suggested, if it were a fact that some pseudo-Isaiah, living during the Exile, wrote the latter portion, then the similarity between him and the real Isaiah in respect to cast of mind, style of thought and expression would be a greater miracle than prophetic vision itself. Hence, those critics who espouse this doctrine of a second Isaiah, for the sake of avoiding the admission of supernatural agency in prophecy, have another case of supernatural phenomena to dispose of not a whit less stubborn than that of prophetic vision. In regard to the peculiar and salient points of Isaiah's style, it is scarcely possible by any analysis of particulars to give the reader any stronger impression of the unity of the book than a careful perusal will make on any appreciative mind; yet the following specifications may aid the honest inquirer. Note his boldness in the use of the figure which rhetoricians call "*apostrophe*"—e.g., invoking "the heavens and the earth." "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth," etc. (1 : 2 and 34 : 1). In the later prophecies, "Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth," etc. (41 : 1 ; 45 : 8 and 49 : 13). Note also one peculiar manner of predicting future events, not by simply affirming that they will be indicatively, but by commanding that they be done, or that the party in question *do them imperatively*. Of this sort, in the earlier prophecies, see chaps. 10 : 30 ; 13 : 2 ; 14 : 29, 31 ; 21 : 2, 5 ; 23 : 1, 2, etc. In the later prophecies, compare chaps. 44 : 27 ; 47 : 1, 2, 5 ; 49 : 9 ; 51 : 9 ; 52 : 1, 2 and 60 : 1. This list might be much increased. Again, observe how naturally his strong emotions seek utterance in *song*. On great occasions of joy, in view of inspiring truths, he calls for songs of praise, and sometimes gives the very words of the song to be sung. In the earlier prophecies, see chaps. 12 : 1-6 ; 25 : 9 and 26 : 1-4. In the later, chaps. 42 : 10-12 ; 44 : 23 ; 48 : 20 ; 49 : 13 and 52 : 9. And finally, as an instance of somewhat minute figures, take his allusions to the potter and his clay; in the former part, chap. 29 : 16, and in the latter, chaps. 45 : 9 and 64 : 8. Hence, the internal evidence becomes an argu-

ment for the unity of this book which cannot be gainsayed. Even the German critics (*e.g.*, Ewald), who insist most strenuously that not Isaiah, but some "great unknown" wrote the last twenty-seven chapters, yet ascribe to him essentially the same qualities of mind and of style as to the true Isaiah in the first portion. This frank but inevitable admission is really the strongest internal evidence that the book all comes from one Isaiah.

The actual differences of thought and of style are easily accounted for. In this latter portion Isaiah has passed on beyond the scenes of the life of Ahaz and beyond the thrilling events of the reign and personal life of Hezekiah. His external surroundings are therefore very much changed. Enjoying a serene old age, he lives far onward in the better days of Zion. But the *man* remains the same. The author, the poet, the prophet, the Christian—all are still the same. His conceptions of the Messiah and of the wide extent of His peaceful reign are the same. Lapse of years, the influence of age and the great change in his circumstances, account amply for all the real changes in his style. Hence the inference comes with resistless force that the same Isaiah wrote both portions.

2. *The testimony of Jewish authority is unwavering.* The compilers of these writings, living far back toward those times, have given us the whole book as the prophecies of one and the same Isaiah. No counter voice has ever been heard from the Jewish fathers—*e.g.*, from those who translated the Septuagint, or those who brought out the Chaldee Paraphrasts, or who have in any way expressed the opinions of the ancient Jews respecting the authorship of this book. In any similar written productions, such testimony would be accounted decisive.

The legitimate force of this argument will be seen yet more clearly by supposing the theory of two Isaiahs to be true. Let it then be supposed that about the time of the Restoration, a second Isaiah lived and wrote the last twenty-seven chapters of what comes to us as the book of the prophet Isaiah. This supposition may seem to be easily made; but it creates a demand for an answer to such questions as the following: Who was this Isaiah No. 2? What was his name? How came he to be a "great unknown?" Was he a Jew, living among the Jews of the Exile? So the supposition must assume; but why has he no place and no record in Jewish history? How does it happen that his writings exhibit no traces of Chaldean figures and symbols, such as abound in Ezekiel

and Daniel? How could such a man, so great, of qualities so commanding, of influence necessarily so pervading, live and die without making even a ripple on the surface of Jewish history? A contemporary almost necessarily of Ezekiel, certainly of Daniel, at a time when Jewish prophets were rare, were much sought for, and certain to come to the surface of society and of history, too; how can the theory be accounted for, that one of the greatest of all Jewish prophets lived and died unknown to history? But even this is not all. How came his writings to appear in the accepted sacred canon without his name? How came they to be appended to the prophecies of the great Isaiah with no note or hint of their being written by a different author, living one hundred and seventy years later? Who perpetrated this fraud upon the Jewish canon; this fraud upon the Jewish nation and upon the whole religious world? Was this done by Ezra and his associates? Living so near this time, almost within this very age, they could not have done it ignorantly. They must have known all the facts of the case. Did *they* perpetrate this literary fraud upon the true Isaiah? Were they *inspired* to do this? Can any of the German critics assign any plausible reason for such a fraud on the Church universal and on mankind? Have they thought of attempting an answer to these and similar questions? Should they not be aware that the Christian feeling, not to say the common sense of men, will and ought to demand a fair answer to all these questions and to many more of the same sort?

3. *The authority of the New Testament is most abundant,* and with all who accept the testimony of Christ and of His apostles, is perfectly *decisive*. Thus, Matthew (3:3) quotes from Isa. 40:3-5, affirming, "This is what was spoken of by the prophet Esaias." Again (12:17-21), he quotes from Isa. 42:1-4, here also endorsing Isaiah as the author of this chapter. "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet." John (12:38) ascribes to Isaiah the words found (Isa. 53:1), just as in the next three verses he credits Isaiah with another passage found (Isa. 6:9, 10). In his view, Isaiah wrote chap. 53 as truly as chap. 6—*i.e.*, the latter portion of this book as really as the former. Philip (Acts 8:27-35) met the Ethiopian eunuch reading Isaiah the prophet, and found the passage to be this very fifty-third chapter. Paul (Rom 10:16) ascribes the first verse of this chapter to Isaiah, and in Rom. 10:20, 21 ascribes to him also the first two verses of chap. 65. And, finally, our Lord

Himself (Luke 4 : 17-19) read in the synagogue service from the Book of Isaiah, the passage standing (Isa. 61 : 1, 2). Did Jesus Christ and His inspired apostles *know* whereof they affirmed, or were they mistaken in attributing these chapters to Isaiah? Do the critics in question know more and better on this point than they? Is it even supposable that inspired men endorsed these as the words of Isaiah without being aware of their mistake; or that, knowing the universal mistake of the Jews in this particular, they did not regard it as sufficiently important to be exposed and rectified? Those who shall carefully and truly weigh all this testimony in support of the genuineness of Isa., chaps. 40-66, will conclude that it cannot be ruled out or overbalanced by the naked assumption that the Infinite God *could* not, or, being able, would not inspire the real Isaiah to write what now stands in these last twenty-seven chapters. For the controversy comes in the end to this very question: *Is prophecy from God?* Those who admit this will have no question as to the genuineness of the entire Book of Isaiah. Those who deny real inspiration have a stubborn witness to dispose of in this ancient document bearing the name of the Book of Isaiah the prophet. Fair criticism has never impeached the unity of this book, and has never set aside or rebutted its testimony to the fact of real prophetic inspiration—and never can. The testimonies here adduced from the New Testament show conclusively that, up to that period, no thought of a second Isaiah had yet entered the minds of men. In fact this notion was never broached until a century ago, in 1779-80, by the German critic Koppe. H. C.

These chapters do indeed make mention of the Babylonish exile, the capture of Babylon by Cyrus, and the release of the Jews from captivity. But this does not disprove the authorship of Isaiah, except on the assumption that prophetic foresight of specific events is impossible. And it is to be observed:

1. That the author of these chapters nowhere connects himself, in any way, with the Exile, by any mention of localities, incidents, or circumstances belonging to it, as is done, for example, by Ezekiel.

2. While specific mention is made of Babylon, Cyrus and the restoration of the Jews, no such particulars are given as might be expected from one living in the midst of the scenes referred to. The language employed is mostly figurative and general, such as is suggestive of a prophet surveying a future period of calami-

ty and trial, rather than one who is depicting what he has witnessed and experienced.

3. In repeated passages the state of things implied is that which existed before the Exile. Thus the Temple and its services (Isa. 43 : 22-24 ; 65 : 11 ; 66 : 1-3, 6, 20) ; the people seeking alliance with foreign monarchs (Isa. 57 : 9, 11) ; the threatened punishment not yet inflicted (Isa. 56 : 9-57 : 2).

4. Frequent rebukes of idolatry, and passages in which its folly and absurdity are shown. And this in forms which prevailed before the Exile, as the Moloch abomination in the valley of Hinnom (Isa. 57 : 5-7), or rites derived from Egypt rather than Babylon (Isa. 65 : 3, 4 ; 66 : 17).

5. Numerous passages in which the deity of Jehovah is proved, as opposed to idols, who can predict nothing and accomplish nothing, whereas Jehovah both predicted Cyrus long before and raised him up for the deliverance of His people (Isa. 41 : 1, 21-29 ; 42 : 9 ; 43 : 9-12 ; 45 : 3, 4).

It is alleged that these events were too remote to be of any present interest to the people in Isaiah's time; but they did not know, and there is no evidence that he knew, that any long interval would elapse before their occurrence. At the outset of his ministry he had predicted the desolation of the land and the exile of the people (Isa. 6 : 11, 12), to be accomplished by a powerful and distant nation (Isa. 5 : 26 sqq.), which, at a later time, he declared would be Babylon (Isa. 39 : 5-7), as did also his contemporary, Micah (Mic. 3 : 12 ; 4 : 10). It was promised that this should not take place in Hezekiah's days (Isa. 39 : 8), whose life was to be prolonged fifteen years (Isa. 38 : 5) ; but no assurance had been given beyond that time.

It is alleged that the people are throughout these chapters uniformly represented as actually in exile. But this is a mistake. The prophet here transports himself in thought—as the prophets often do—into the midst of the scenes which he foretells; but his actual present prior to the Exile shines through in numerous passages, as has already been shown. In Isa. 45 : 4-13 he looks forward to the capture of Babylon as future; in Isa. 46 : 1, 2, he looks back upon it as past; in Isa. 51 : 3 (Rev. Ver.) the desolations of Zion are already repaired; in Isa. 53 the humiliation and vicarious death of the Messiah are described as having already taken place. The prophet thus takes his stand successively at different points in the future, showing that these represent not his real, but his ideal, present.

It is said that there are many words and phrases in these chapters which are not found in the acknowledged writings of Isaiah, and *vice versa*. But Dr. Stanley Leathes has shown ("The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ," Boyle Lectures for 1868, pp. 282, 283, quoted by Dr. Edersheim in his "Prophecy and History in Relation to the Messiah," pp. 283, 284) that there is ten times the reason, on the ground of diversity of diction, for assuming a deutero-Milton or Tennyson as for imagining a deutero-Isaiah. *W. H. Green.*

Internal Evidence from the Imagery.

In the books of the Old Testament the scenery of Palestine is reflected as the mountain which towers above the valley and the cloud that crowns the peak are mirrored in the lake which lies below. If internal evidence be proof at all there is proof abundant that the Pentateuch and all the chapters of Isaiah were written amid the hills of Palestine, in sight of its rocky ridges, with orchard of olive and grove of palm in full view. *Interior.*

With the exception of a very few detached passages, the most conspicuous of these passages being the prophecy concerning Cyrus (chaps. 44, 45), the Book of Isaiah throughout assumes that the Jews were living in their own country when it was written. All the coloring is thoroughly pre-exilic. *W. J. Beecher.*

The latter half of the Book of Isaiah, whose authorship is in question, is a composition abounding in metaphors, imagery, and allusions to natural scenery; and these must have been determined by the physical features of the country in which it had its birth. If not written, as it purports to be, by Isaiah, the alternate theory is that it was written by some one, *at the close of the Exile, living in Babylon*. No two countries could be much more dissimilar in physical features than Palestine and Babylon; the one a land of rugged, often barren mountains, with little green valleys winding among them, with narrow plains and vine-clad slopes, and cattle upon a thousand hills; the other a flat, irrigated plain, so level that the monarch must build lofty artificial structures to simulate and suggest the mountains for his mountain-bred queen. We have before us, then, a sufficiently practicable problem. Given a certain piece of composition to determine by the figures and illustrations whether it was written in the mountains of Judea or the level stretches of Babylon. We may begin the examination of the document, then, with the understanding that, if written in Babylon, it

could not differ very radically in imagery and symbolism from the ordinary native literature, and must be conditioned by the physical features of the landscape and life in Babylon.

When we open the book what do we find? Almost the first utterance strikes us like a blast from the mountains and rocky steeps of the wilderness of Judea: "The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah, make level in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low: and the uneven shall be made level, and the rough places a plain: and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (40:3 ff.). From that right on through to the end there is hardly a chapter that does not have the odor of the hills, the hot breath of the wilderness, or the roar of the waves beating on the rocky coast of Palestine. Scattered all through the twenty-seven chapters into which this writing is divided are more than twenty direct allusions to mountains and mountain scenery, not counting half a dozen other places where the terms mountain, rock, etc., are used as appellations without necessarily implying acquaintance with mountain scenery. All these passages refer to the mountains as objects so vividly familiar to the hearers that their scenery and even unstriking details could be used for symbols and illustrations of religious truths. Besides these allusions to mountains, there are about sixty other explicit allusions to natural scenery and outdoor life, all of which are perfectly applicable to Palestine, most of them far more so than to Babylon, and many would not fit the Babylonian life scenery and outlook at all.

So also we may class, perhaps, the many references to the sea and to the islands. Of course the Chaldeans had more or less to do with ships and seagoing, as indeed is implied in 43:14: "I will bring down all of them as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships of their rejoicing." But to the peasants in the city and plains of Babylon the sea was something remote and mysterious, the symbol of the unknown. To the dwellers in Palestine the sea was near and present, washing all along their borders and visible even from the high lands of the interior. The sight of the tossing waters and the roar of the waves rolling in among the rocks of the coast were facts in their experience. And so in this writing we find the sea always conceived of as something whose phenomena were familiar to the hearers. There is another object that is referred to as remote and more or

less mysterious—viz., “the isles of the sea.” Apparently these were the islands in the Mediterranean, if, as commonly supposed, *Tarshish* be some Mediterranean point.

Another group of passages refers to the scenes and life of the *wilderness*. To the Babylonian the wilderness was a place remote, unknown, suggesting only fear and mystery. To the Jew it was something near and familiar, part of his own land, where he led his own flocks and herds to graze. Rough, parched, and barren he knew it to be, but he also knew its little green valleys and springs among the rocks, or the grass springing up for a little while after the rains, when the mountain torrents poured down their floods, gradually drying up again as the heat of summer advanced. To him the wilderness was not the symbol of remoteness and mystery, but only of barrenness and distress, and that not universal, but relieved in many places by little valleys of rest and greenness, and by occasional floods bringing fertility and happiness. It is just this latter conception of the springs and fertilizing floods in the wilderness that is most made use of by our author. (See 41:17, 18; 42:15; 43:11, 19, 20; 44:3; 49:10; 50:2; 63:13; 58:11, and many others.)

Another group of passages of considerable significance refers to rain, snow, etc. In Palestine rain was all important to the farmer, as absolutely necessary for his crops, while in Babylon, where irrigation was chiefly depended on, the rain was not so considered. So in Babylonian literature we find clouds and rain more commonly associated with the idea of storms, whirlwinds and destruction. In our writing, however, we find rain referred to only as a fertilizing agent. (See 44:14; 55:10, etc.)

Another significant class of passages is those that relate to the preparation of a road for the coming of Jehovah. We can infer much as to the character of the country upon which the eyes of the audience daily rested, by noting the kind of preparation which the speaker conceives as being made for the coming of the Exalted One. The passage at the very beginning of the document sets it forth at some length.

“Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the Lord; make level in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the uneven shall be made level, and the rough places a plain” (40:3, 4).

Both mountains and hills are specified, indicating that it was more than a merely undulating or broken country. The image presented

is either the bold one of the mountains being levelled down and the valleys filled up so as to make the whole country a plain, or possibly only what was familiar as seen in all the great public roads through the country; deep cuts through the mountains, and the road built up across the valleys, so as to be made as level and easy as possible, while instead of the crooked footpaths, winding zigzag over the hills, is substituted the one broad “smooth” and comparatively “straight” public highway, if that is the translation we are to give the text. (See 49:11; 57:14; 62:10, etc.)

But strong as is the evidence of the foregoing passages, we have not yet considered the strongest, most numerous, and most decisive passages of all—those that refer directly and explicitly to the mountains and mountain life and scenery. Here it seems to me the evidence is conclusive. All their moods and pledges are referred to, and referred to merely incidentally, without explanation or comment, and especially the little inconspicuous scenes and homely events, which have much greater significance because they would be the most unlikely to be referred to either by or to persons who knew the mountains only at second hand. What, for instance, could be more homely and yet more suggestive than the picture in chap. 63:14: “As the cattle that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused them to rest.” These allusions are scattered all through this writing from beginning to end. In its very first chapter we have: “O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain” (40:9). And in the next to the last chapter: “Which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed Me upon the hills” (65:7). And there is hardly a chapter between but has some similar allusion.

One of the most striking expressions in the book is that found in chap. 49:13 and elsewhere: “Sing, O ye heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains.” This would be a most improbable creation of the imagination of one living in a level country. But the mountaineer, wishing for some object to personify to take up his song, finds the heavens, the earth and the mountains the most prominent objects before his own and his hearers’ sight.

In many other passages also we find the mountains referred to in a way and in connections in which a dweller in a level country would be very unlikely to conceive of them, no matter how well informed he was about their appearance and characteristics, especially since

his *hearers* would see no force or aptness in the figures used. Thus, chap. 49 : 11 : "I will make all My mountains a way." Why use the mountains for that purpose, except that the mountains made up a very large proportion of the landscape known to both speaker and hearers? Thus, too, chap. 40 : 12 : "Who hath weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?" As designed to portray boundless power, it is just the figure that would be most impressive in Judea. But many other figures could be found to convey these ideas more vividly to the dweller in a level land.

Such are some of the more obvious allusions to natural scenery in this document. Is it possible that they could have come from a native of such a country as we know the flat plains of Babylon to have been? A Jewish writer in Babylon, at the close of the Exile, could not differ materially in his imagery from the ordinary writers of the country; but we have found this writing filled with allusions to scenes not found in Babylon at all, but common in Palestine. Of the allusions to mountain scenery some single ones are of such a character as to be alone almost conclusive; their frequency shows how vivid such scenes were to the author's mind. Especially when we consider how this whole composition is saturated with allusions to the scenery of Palestine, and contains not a single reference to the characteristic scenery of Babylon the conclusion seems irresistible that Babylon could not have been the birth-place of the document. *D. A. Murray.*

Diction and Style.

The difference of style in these chapters, on which great stress has been laid by some modern critics to prove their later authorship, is not explained in the least by referring them to an unknown writer near the close of the Exile. They are unlike all the known writings of that period. On the other hand, the difference is just what we might expect, if they were written by Isaiah during those later days of "truth and peace" (39 : 8). For here, in agreement with that temporary and merciful change, the details of the earlier prophecies, the stern rebukes with which they begin, their woes and burdens, blossom out into rich and beautiful promise. New subjects demand some new words and phrases. A denial of the genuineness on this ground must be simply puerile, unless the contrast were extreme. It would require us to infer that hardly one book of considerable size is throughout from the same author. But most of the alleged contrasts, when

examined, prove erroneous and illusive; while the resemblances, which attest the common origin of both parts, are many and important, and cannot be referred to chance alone. *Birks.*

The true argument from diction is complex and delicate. Each author's vocabulary is an element in that indescribable whole which we call style, and which several hundred writers since Buffon have called "the man himself." If Isaiah wrote both the chief sections of the book that goes by his name, then there will be a multitude of philological filaments binding together these two halves, which will not connect the disputed portions with any other writing or group of writings. If such traces are absent, the unity of Isaiah is scientifically disproved. Accordingly I prepared a Hebrew index to chaps. 40-66, giving *in extenso* the entire Isaian use of each word. The occurrences elsewhere being grouped roughly by classes, I determined the extent of the difference between the vocabulary of the earlier and the later prophets, taken as a whole. The vocabulary of Isaiah B proved to resemble closely that of the prophets before the Exile, to resemble Isaiah A most closely of all, and to incline less toward that of the exilic and post-exilic prophets, with no solitary exception even when each arbitrary division, according to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, was taken by itself. Minute examination of the separate words, beginning with the rarest, tended constantly to the same result, some of the individual cases being very striking; and then an elaborate comparison was instituted between Isaiah B and the only undisputed prophet of the Exile, Ezekiel, from whom he was found to differ (while agreeing with Isaiah A) in his total environment, that is, in words pertaining to organic and inorganic nature, and to all manner of human relations; and especially in the names for God. This material was published in four numbers of the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 1881-82. The argument has been sometimes misconceived, for its value evidently depends upon the accumulated mass of its particulars. It is not a chain which must fall if a single link be broken; it resembles rather a multitude of pillars, all supporting a common conclusion. *W. H. Cobb.*

[Some detailed points from Mr. Cobb's summary of his papers in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* are here subjoined. B.]

By a series of careful enumerations, there was ascertained the whole number of words in the Hebrew vocabulary, then the number in each main division of Isaiah, in the entire book, in the earlier prophets, the later prophets, and

the prophets as a whole; also the commonest and the rarest words in the so-called later Isaiah, with a few other particulars. It was thence proved that the vocabulary of Isaiah B presents striking affinities with that of the earlier prophets (especially Isaiah A) and striking diversities from that of the later prophets. This appeared both from the *number* of coincident words and from their *character*. For instance, while eight hundred and forty-eight of B's words are found in A, only seven hundred and thirty-five occur in the exile-prophet, Ezekiel, though his prophecy is about twice as long as A's. Again, there are eight words found in both parts of Isaiah and nowhere else, but only one word peculiar to Isaiah B and the period of the Exile. The books of the Old Testament I arranged in groups, according to two systems of classification, and the vocabulary of Isaiah B (excepting proper names, and words so common as to be indecisive) was taken up word by word, the number of occurrences of each word in all the classes was recorded, and the occurrences in Isaiah were cited by chapter and verse. From this "Hebrew Index" tables were deduced, proceeding from the more rare to the more frequent words, and showing by each particular grouping that the language of B belongs in the class which includes A, and can readily be excluded from Ezekiel's class.

A concluding article is given in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for July, 1882, carrying out with great care an examination of the local color of Isaiah B as compared with that of Isaiah A, on the one hand, and the late prophets, on the other. It will be seen that this argument advances a stage from the mere grouping of words to the comparison of ideas. Beginning with inorganic nature, I have gone through the vegetable, animal, and human kingdoms, noting agreements and disagreements, and finding that, whoever wrote the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah, it cannot be fairly denied that his environment was very like that of the genuine Isaiah, and very unlike the scenery of Babylon. The evidence examined next, that drawn from the names of God, does not lose its force when stated in brief. It appears from induction (as might have been judged *a priori*) that most of the earlier prophets use these Divine titles with great freedom, while in later times there seemed to be a special sacredness attached to two or three names, which caused a loss of spontaneity. Thus Ezekiel almost always employs "Jehovah" or "Adonai Jehovah." But both parts of Isaiah blend with these a rich variety of other terms in such a way as to be

characteristic of the earlier prophets and to reveal also a minute and evidently undesigned correspondence of part with part. The particular terms they employ have sometimes a special weight in the argument. Thus "the Holy One of Israel," occurring fourteen times in each part, is found nowhere else among the prophets, except twice in the last chapters of Jeremiah, which seem to presuppose Isaiah's predictions against Babylon. Again, the Divine title "King," the idea at the root of the theocracy, is frequently met with both in writers before and after the Exile; its absence from the undisputed prophecies of that period is certainly a natural circumstance; yet it is found in both parts of Isaiah. Equally natural is the fact that the writers of the Exile abstain from that title of God so common among the prophets—"Jehovah Sabaoth." The victorious leader of Israel's "hosts," the God of her "armies," was not likely to be invoked by that name when those forces were defeated and humbled. Yet "Jehovah Sabaoth" occurs six times in Isaiah B, as well as often in Isaiah A. *W. H. Cobb.*

No Proper Marks of a Distinct Work near the Close of the Captivity. 1. The prophet is wanting and cannot be found. 2. The title and name are also wanting. The Old Testament contains sixteen books of prophecy from as many different authors. But in every case, without exception, the name of the prophet meets us at the opening of his work. Had these chapters proceeded, then, from some prophet near the close of the Exile, his name, without doubt, would have stood at their opening. This results not only from these sixteen precedents, but even from the laws of common sense. No king would commit a royal message, claiming the obedience of his subjects, to nameless hands, or to parties left without any proof or sign of their royal commission. How much less could these noblest prophecies form a solitary exception to this universal rule!

3. The date and place are wanting, as well as the prophet himself, and his name. All the four leading prophets and seven of the other twelve have dates given, besides their name, to fix their historical standpoint. Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, in whom alone this is wanting, are assigned to persons historically defined; and besides, their writings are together less than one half the length of these later prophecies.

4. The prophetic call and commission is wanting. This marks all the other leading books of prophecy. It occupies the sixth chapter of

Isaiah, the first of Jeremiah, the first and second both of Ezekiel and Daniel, the first of Hosca, several verses of Amos, one half of Jonah, and is present both in Haggai and Zechariah.

5. Contemporary persons and names are also wanting. These form one striking feature of all the more important books of prophecy, whereby their intimate connection with the actual course of God's providence and of the sacred history is maintained. Seventeen persons are thus named in Isaiah, fifty in Jeremiah, eight or ten in Ezekiel, besides definite groups, like the elders and the sun-worshippers; about the same number in Daniel, and thirty in the books of the minor prophets. But in these later prophecies, written, by the hypothesis, in stirring times, and at a most critical season of Israel's history, not a single personal or historical name, except that of Cyrus only, can be found.

6. The prophetic structure, also, is wholly absent. The early prophecies of Isaiah, and every other book from Jeremiah to Malachi, have one common feature. They begin with history or prophetic warning, and then pass on to the utterance of bright hopes and gracious promises. There is one slight exception, because Haggai and Zechariah prophesied together, and Haggai's earlier voice, mainly of rebuke and warning, was continued at once, by his brother prophet, in words of comfort and promise. In every other case this order is observed, and thus forms a kind of law in every complete prophetic message. The warnings of the law constantly prepare the way for the hopes of the Gospel. This rule is fully observed on the usual view of these chapters, that they are later portions of Isaiah's own work. But the moment they are referred to a different and unknown author, it is contradicted and reversed. This message, unlike the voice of every known prophet, would then hurry at once, without a word of caution or rebuke, into utterances of fullest and brightest promise.

7. The strong assertions of Divine foreknowledge in reference to the victories of Cyrus are a further disproof of the later date. This appeal is made strongly and repeatedly (Isa. 41 : 23, 25, 26 ; 42 : 9 ; 43 : 9 ; 44 : 25, 26 ; 45 : 3, 4 ; 46 : 10, 11). The transfer of these predictions to the days of Cyrus himself robs them of all their force, and contradicts their plain meaning. It degrades a series of striking prophecies into falsehoods, the work of some reckless and unscrupulous forger, who habitually takes

the holy name of God in vain, to disguise his forgeries. Thus every feature of name, title, structure and internal contents, which would naturally belong to a prophetic writing near the close of the Exile, so far as these can be inferred by strict induction from existing prophecies, is wholly wanting in these later visions of Isaiah.

FURTHER, 1. The two portions of the book have also a close and intimate relation to the history which is interposed between them. The main subject of the first part is the progress and triumphs of the Assyrian power, which was to reach even to the neck, and cover the whole land ; but then to dash itself vainly against the rock of God's covenant and the bulwarks of Zion. These warnings begin chap. 5, and reach their climax in chap. 33, when the last invasion seems to have been actually begun. The history (chaps. 36, 37) first recounts this very crisis and Sennacherib's overthrow. Next, in the narrative (chap. 38), of Hezekiah's sickness and recovery, and the reversed decline of the shadow in the dial of Ahaz, it marks the transition to a gracious though short reprieve in the decline of the kingdom. This episode of history closes, in chap. 39, with a clear announcement of the coming captivity of Babylon. The earlier prophecies all converge on the first of these three events, and the later ones all diverge from the last. They assume the fulfilment of this predicted captivity, and open out the fulness of those hopes of Israel which lay beyond it. The middle event, which parts the reign of Hezekiah into a morning of cloud and tempest, and an eventide of peace and truth, is also represented by the plain contrast of warning and promise in the two main portions of the book which precede and follow.

2. These two portions correspond also with the position and character of Isaiah, the chief of the prophets, and with the moral object of the prophetic word, as the Divine bridge between the law of Moses and the Gospel of Christ. In the usual chronology, the year of Hezekiah's recovery is just midway between the song and death of Moses, the last year of Israel in the wilderness, and the preaching of the Baptist, the first dawn of the Gospel. Now the earlier prophecies answer to the warnings of the law, to which they allude in their first sentence (Isa. 1 : 2 ; De. 32 : 1) ; while it is from the later that Isaiah has received his title of the evangelical prophet, because they contain such clear and full anticipations of the Gospel. And this relation is still more complete. For while the first portion begins with a direct reference

to the warnings in the song of Moses, which it proclaims as fulfilled, the second portion opens with a direct prophecy of the Baptist, the fore-runner of our Lord. Thus the two parts link themselves, in their opening sentences, with the latest warnings of the law and the earliest notes of Gospel promise.

3. These later prophecies, also, on close examination, will be found to have their text in chap. 35, the close of the earlier ones, which they amplify and unfold. [Expanded in thirty particulars, p. 336, etc.] *Birks.*

Summary of Argument, pp. 411-415.

There is just the same reason for referring the earlier as the later prophecies to some later prophet than Isaiah. The whole argument then is nugatory, and the sameness of the proportions of the three classes in the two divisions is a fresh, indirect and collateral proof of their common authorship. Both in the earlier and later prophecies there are four or five chapters where the prophetic present seems to be in the time of Isaiah himself, but more expressly so in the later than in the earlier; in each there are four or five chapters when the prophet seems rather translated from his own actual place two or three centuries into the times of Cyrus, though more explicitly and clearly in the later than in the earlier prophecies. Thus the last pretext for the dual hypothesis on close examination disappears and yields a fresh argument in proof of its falsehood; those are thus left, I think, without the least excuse who venture to contradict the testimony of our Lord Himself in the very opening of His grand commission of mercy, and the consenting testimony of nearly all the inspired writers of the New Testament. *Birks.*

New Testament Statements.

John the Baptist said: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." The Baptist thus bore witness to a double truth; that he was truly fulfilling an office assigned to him in God's message by Isaiah (40: 3); and that the office thus divinely given him was to go before the face of the Lord, the good Shepherd of Israel, who was now at hand. If these words were not Isaiah's, and do not really refer to the Baptist, then he must have borne witness to a double falsehood in those very words, in which our Lord solemnly declares that "He bare witness to the truth."

Luke, in his Gospel, thus records the opening of our Lord's ministry in the synagogue at

Nazareth. "And there was given him the book of the prophet Esaias, and he found the place where it is written: The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me," etc. (Isa. 61: 1-3). "And he closed the book and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." Here the evangelist himself plainly affirms that chap. 61 is part of the work of Isaiah. But our blessed Lord evidently, by His conduct, affirms the same. The whole roll was given to Him as "the book of Isaiah the prophet." As such He receives it. He then turns to a part, according to modern sceptics wholly spurious, and chooses its words as a sacred and solemn witness to His Divine mission. He claims to be received and honored as God's messenger, nay, as the long-expected Messiah, because His work was fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy. If the words were not those of Isaiah, but of some unknown party in the days of Cyrus, whose horizon was bounded by his own days, and could not possibly reach forward through five centuries to come, what conclusion must follow?

John thus describes our Lord's rejection by the Jewish rulers. "But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? . . . Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, etc. These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him" (John 12: 37-41). The beloved disciple, the great prophet of the New Testament, here testifies that the early and the later prophecies of this book belong equally to Isaiah. In one of the two passages cited he received his first commission, and in the other he reached its crowning honor. In one he saw the glory of Christ, and in the other he spake of His sufferings with clearest voice. But the testimony of the apostle goes farther, since he assures us that the central fact of our Lord's ministry was a direct fulfilment of Isaiah's warning message.

Our Lord's own testimony, at the very close of His ministry, is, if possible, even still more striking: "For I say unto you, that this which is written must yet be fulfilled in Me, And he was numbered among the transgressors; for the things concerning Me have an end." The exact force of the words is rather, "For even the things which concern ME have their fulfilment."

The Gospel of Christ was to have its first en-

trance to a distant nation through the Ethiopian eunuch; and Philip, the evangelist, for this great end, receives a miraculous commission. "The angel of the Lord spake unto him, Arise, and go toward the south," etc. He finds the eunuch reading "Esaiah the prophet." "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaiah." If these verses, which the eunuch was reading, are not Isaiah's, and do not really predict the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, but are a doubtful guess at the sufferings of Israel or of the prophets by a nameless writer in the days of Cyrus, or the history of "some other man," what conclusion will follow? The eunuch would have been deceived, and taught a double falsehood, and this would then have been the first step in the conversion of Ethiopia to the Christian faith.

Paul, in his Epistle to Rome, the Gentile metropolis, has for one main object to prove the Divine call of the Gentiles, that doctrinal and historical foundation of the Church of Christ. He uses for this end five main scriptural arguments. The first is taken from these later prophecies, without naming their author (Rom. 10:15). The next is from these same prophecies, ascribing them expressly to Isa. 10:16. His third proof is that the Jews had a prediction of this fact in the law of Moses itself (10:19). His fourth is that Isaiah had announced it still more plainly; and his fifth and last, that Isaiah, once more, had placed it side by side with a warning of Jewish unbelief (Rom. 10:20, 21; Isa. 65:1, 2). Thus, in this main argument of the apostle to the Gentiles, to confirm a great doctrine of Christianity, the chief warrant for his own manifold labors, three proofs out of five directly involve the genuineness of these later prophecies as Isaiah's own, while a fourth rests on their character as inspired messages of God. The theory which ascribes them to some unknown hand in the days of Cyrus turns his whole reasoning into mischievous errors and worthless fallacies. And thus, before the spuriousness of these chapters can be received, the Gospels, the Acts and the Epistles, Matthew, Luke, John, Philip the evangelist, Paul must be condemned together. *Birks.*

Alleged Objections.

The chief reasons, which have been alleged to justify a desertion of the constant faith of the Church of Christ, and of the direct testimony of our Lord and His apostles, have been summed up as follows in a recent English work.

"It is a first principle that the historical horizon of a prophet belongs to his own time. He takes his stand in his own generation, and looks onward from it. His starting-point lies in the circumstances of the age he lives in. This analogy is violated by such as attribute these chapters to Isaiah, since their visible horizon is the time of the Exile." This first principle is a plain self-contradiction. A standpoint and an horizon, the centre and the circumference of a landscape, are not the same. The true first principle is that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and could therefore announce whatever the Spirit of God, who sees the end from the beginning, was pleased to reveal. It is another first principle, clearly laid down in these same chapters, that He "declareth the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things not yet done" (46:10). The objection, so far as it implies a truth, yields a direct proof of the genuineness. The starting-point of a prophet, though not his horizon or limit of view, is in the circumstances of his own age. So the starting-point of this book, if all be genuine, is in its first chapters, and these abound in references to Isaiah's time. But these later visions, if spurious, have *their* starting-point in chap. 40, where no single person, place, or circumstance of the Exile is introduced. They would thus float in the air with no historical starting-point whatever.

2. "Isaiah could not have taken such a bound as to predict a far distant personal Messiah, consistently with the analogy of prophecy. Such leaps into the future are unknown." Our Lord said to the Jews—"Abraham your father rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad," and "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me." Yet Abraham lived twelve centuries, and Moses seven centuries, before Isaiah. The assertion, then, flatly contradicts Him whose name is the Truth. The exact reverse is really true, that "all the prophets bear witness" of Messiah (Acts 10:43), and that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10).

3. "The prophet indicates very clearly his own position, historically and geographically, in chap. 52:4, 5. Whether *these* be referred to place, Babylon, or mean 'in the present case,' he alludes to the Chaldean Exile as then present." This remark combines four errors. First, the date of these later prophecies can never be fixed by one text midway in their course, where the Lord Himself, not the prophet, is plainly

the speaker. Next, this chapter has plainly no fixed standpoint, but a varying horizon. For in the second verse Zion is described as still captive, and in verse 9 has been comforted and redeemed. Thirdly, we have a clear indication that prophetic or ideal, not actual time, is expressed, by the remark which follows: "Therefore they shall know *in that day* that I am He that doth speak," etc. The time of the fulfilment is there contrasted with that of the prophecy. Lastly, a reference to the Babylonish Exile, except allusively, or as an earnest, seems disproved by the context, which points us to a time when Jerusalem shall be no more defiled by the presence of the unclean. This may apply to the future close of the times of the Gentiles, but was not true of the Return from Babylon.

4. "It is implied, in various places, that Jerusalem and the cities of Judah are depopulated and decayed, but that they shall be rebuilt (44:26-28; 51:3; 52:9; 58:12; 62:4; 64:10, 11; 44:28; 58:12; 61:4)." All these passages imply and require some previous mention of the desolation, either in the form of historical statement or direct prophecy. If the chapters are from Isaiah, this condition is amply satisfied by eight or ten clear predictions of this great change (1:24-26; 3:25, 26; 6:11, 12; 7:23-25; 14:3, 4; 17:9-11; 24:12; 27:10; 32:13, 14). But if spurious, or from an unknown writer at the close of the Exile, this essential condition wholly fails to be satisfied. This "Unknown" would rush at once into bright predictions of Israel's Return, before one word was given to throw light on his own circumstances, or to affirm the present state of exile. Thus it comes to pass that one critic of the negative school places him in Palestine, another in Egypt, a third in Babylon; some just after the fall of the Temple, others just before the Return. The objection is really fatal to the theory it is brought to confirm.

5. "The people are described as robbed, spoiled and imprisoned, whose time of deliverance is nigh" (42:22-24). This text, also, is a strong disproof of the view it is said to confirm. For the appeal is there openly made: "Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken and hear *for the time to come*?" The message of calamity is thus given to the people beforehand, that, when it is fully arrived, they may lay it to heart. From this it follows, by natural inference, that the prophecy dates before the Exile.

6. "The writer shows a minute acquaintance with the relations of the Oriental world in his

day. The Chaldean empire is depicted in the height of its splendor, but its fall is near. He refers to intestine wars (49:26), Evil-Merodach murdered by Neriglissar, etc. Cyrus is named, and his conquests referred to, and his designs against Egypt, which Cambyes carried out; and the Persians rewarded by the gift of Egypt, Ethiopia and Meroe. Such specific details could only proceed from one living near the end of the Exile, when Babylon's fall was at hand." This objection consists of five elements. First, that the Spirit of God could not know, and therefore could not reveal, the state of the eastern world so long beforehand as two centuries. Secondly, that the predictions of Cyrus and his conquests, made here the ground of a solemn appeal to all the heathen on the vanity of their idols in the presence of an All-wise God, who sees the end from the beginning, were profane forgeries after the events, which were foretold in pretence only. Thirdly, that the appeal concerning the oppression of Babylon and its fall, "I have even from the beginning declared it to thee, before it came to pass," means really that a forger described it after all Asia had beheld it. Fourthly, that the threatening, "I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh," means that Evil-Merodach had been murdered fifteen or twenty years before the words were written. Lastly, that chap. 43:3, "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee," describes the conquest of Egypt by Cambyes, and still was written by a forger, whose horizon was the Exile, fifteen or twenty years before the expedition occurred!

7. "Exhortations to the exiles, encouraging them to return, are an anomaly in one like Isaiah, living in the Assyrian period, when the Exile was unknown, and not predicted by any prophet, Amos, Hosea, Micah and Nahum. Our prophets takes his stand in the Exile, and does not predict its desolation and misery." The Exile could not be unknown to "the Lord God of the holy prophets," who sees the end from the beginning. It had been announced by Moses long before, and in Isaiah's own time by Amos (5:27), and even Babylon as the scene of exile by Micah (4:10). "Our prophet" also has predicted its misery and desolation eight or ten times. Israel, too, were one people, and the exile of Ephraim had already come. For a false Isaiah to urge the exiles to return, without one single hint, date, person, or place, by which we might learn who were the persons addressed, and their actual condition, would be most unnatural. On the other hand, what can be more simple and natural than for a prophet,

who has ten times foretold the calamity, in a later and still fuller message to proclaim the deliverance?

8. "The writer often appeals to old announcements as in course of fulfilment (42 : 9 ; 43 : 9 ; 41 : 22 ; 48 : 3)." Such an objection is startling and prodigious, since these four texts supply one of the plainest disproofs of the sceptical theory. For in chap. 41 : 22, 23, 25, a coming of Cyrus, still future, is declared to be such a proof of God's foreknowledge, that by means of it all idols and their worshippers will be confounded and brought to shame. In chap. 43 : 9, also, the declaration of former things—viz., the return of Israel's captives, is again made the reason of a public challenge to the nations and their idols, "Who among them can declare this?" In chap. 48 : 3-8, the clearness of these very predictions is explained by their moral design, to bow the stubborn hearts of the Jews into submissioin and reverence. "Because I knew that thou art obstinate . . . I have even from the beginning declared it to thee ; before it came to pass, I showed it thee." To adduce these very texts as so many proofs that the predictions they contain followed the events, is no common form of scepticism, and seems to call for wonder and sorrow, rather than formal refutation.

9. "The people seem to be without the external ordinances of worship, for the sacrifices and services of the Temple are never referred to. They only keep fast days and Sabbaths." To such an objection quotation is the best reply. "But thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings, . . . neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices" (43 : 23, 24) ; "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man ; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck ; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood" (66 : 3). If all texts alike are to be expounded of actual, not prophetic time, these speak as plainly of an actual Temple, and of sacrifices either neglected or perverted, as others do of a temple in ruins. But if once we admit the use of prophetic time, the whole argument vanishes away.

10. "The writer describes the theocracy of the future in splendid poetry, but without a visible king. But Isaiah always associates a king with the flourishing theocracy (9 : 6 ; 11 : 1 ; 32 : 1)." This objection implies and requires some entire contrast between these three earlier, and the later predictions of Messiah. But, on the contrary, the allusions to the earlier in the later are clear and full. Thus

"the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him" (11 : 2) has its exact counterpart in the words of chap. 42 : 1, "I have put my Spirit upon him," and in the words of Messiah Himself (61 : 1), "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me." The next words, "a branch shall grow up out of his roots," are re-echoed in the description (53 : 2), "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and a root out of a dry ground." Also Messiah is described in the later visions, first, as an object of worship to kings and princes (49 : 7) ; next, as God reigning (52 : 7) ; thirdly, as inheriting the strong for his portion (53 : 12) ; fourthly, as the leader and commander, in whom the sure promises to David are fulfilled (55 : 3, 4) ; and lastly, as the Divine Bridegroom and Redeemer of Israel (59 : 20 ; 61 : 10 ; 62 : 5). The only difference is that the later messages reveal more clearly, not royalty alone, but the sufferings of Christ, and His Divine glory.

11. "Favorite topics of the unknown prophet do not appear in Isaiah, his delineation of the servant of God and vicarious suffering. Idols are combatted with arguments ; and a defence of Jehovah as the only true God is conducted ; and a proof of it founded on His declaring beforehand things future, as a fact which shows the heathen gods to be nothing, because it is beyond their power." The first part of this objection is that the Messiah is described under new titles of honor. It assumes that a prophet must go on repeating the same phrases to the end, and may not, without pain of losing his identity, reveal in new forms or under varied titles "the unsearchable riches of Christ." The next part of it makes an admission fatal to the sceptical theory. It is owned that chap. 53 predicts vicarious sufferings, which can only be those of Messiah. If so, the whole is inspired prophecy, and reaches onward to a future, which was still distant even in the days of Cyrus. Thus the attempt to find a mark of contrast between Isaiah and the "unknown prophet" defeats itself. For if the writer, whoever he were, could predict the vicarious sufferings of Christ five centuries before they occurred, the whole basis of the sceptical hypothesis is overthrown. The last remark is still more adverse to the theory it is intended to sustain. For the argument by which, in these later chapters, idols are denounced and condemned is the clear proof of God's foreknowledge which He has here given, in announcing the fall of Babylon, the conquests of Cyrus, and the return of the Jewish exiles, at a time when these events could not have been

foreseen by merely human wisdom. It follows plainly that these messages could not have been written at the close of the Exile, when those facts were patent to the whole world, unless we suppose this "unknown prophet" to have been just as foolish, blind and senseless as the idols he so sternly condemns. Is it not strange that a critic of eminence should attempt to prove the spuriousness of these later chapters by features which are consistent, logical and impressive, if referred to Isaiah himself, but which, when ascribed to some unknown writer or pseudo-prophet at the close of the Exile, become nothing better than one tissue of impudent and ridiculous folly?

12. "The tone is tenderer and more uniformly evangelical than that of Isaiah, and the ideal hopes and pretendings of the theocracy take a higher, wider and purer range. Political relations enter into them far less than into Isaiah's. The Gentile nations are little regarded; and their destruction is not dwelt upon with fierce rejoicings over it. Accordingly the heart of the Christian more nearly sympathizes with the poetic strains in which the unknown seer expatiates on the trials and hopes of Zion, and the promises of Divine aid to her, than it does with the sublimest descriptions of Isaiah." These words are an example of the bold manner in which critics who have ceased to be disciples bring the words of God to the bar of their own tastes and careless errors. First, the objection is fatally adverse to the theory it is meant to support. Every prophetic message, by a constant and unvaried law, deals more on bright hopes toward its close. Its Sinai comes before its Olivet. This is doubly natural in the case of Isaiah. His earlier prophecies were uttered in times of deep anxiety, in the midst of political storms and the ravages of the Assyrian spoiler. But he survived till the brief reprieve of judgment after the fall of Sennacherib, and the days of "peace and truth" (39:8), when the storm of the terrible had passed away. Again, for an Old Testament prophet to begin his message abruptly with simple promises, before a single word of caution, reproof and remonstrance has prepared the way, contradicts every known precedent. It sets aside a truth which lies deeper than those precedents and occasions them, a settled law of Divine revelation, expressly taught us by Isaiah himself in his earlier prophecies. The Great Husbandman always convicts of sin before He convicts of righteousness, and ploughs and harrows the ground with warnings and judgments before He casts in the incorruptible seed of the prom-

ises of the Gospel. The other remark is untrue, as well as irreverent. For the Gentiles are as prominent in the later as in the earlier prophecies. They are the subject, first, of solemn reproof and warning (chaps. 40, 41), then of repeated promises (chaps. 49, 52:15; 55:4), then have solemn judgments denounced against them (59:19; 63:1-6), and then are addressed in words of rich promise once more (66:12, 19). The "fierce rejoicing" in the destruction of the Gentile oppressors (Isa. 14:3-27) is not one whit more severe than the woes pronounced by our Lord on the Pharisees in Matt. 23, or than the counterpart in the New Testament denunciation of the fall of Babylon (Rev. 18). And there is nothing, even in the later prophecies, which has gathered round it deeper Christian sympathy, love and joy than Isa. 9:6, 7, the keynote of every Christmas celebration, and the promises (25:6-9; 26:1-4), and the outburst of prophetic gladness which closes the whole series in the thirty-fifth chapter.

13. "Jeremiah, a much later prophet, suffered ill-treatment and persecution for predicting a captivity, and none believed him. Had these prophecies been current in the name of a prophet so celebrated as Isaiah, Jeremiah would doubtless have appealed to them. Such a predecessor he could hardly have overlooked, especially as his defenders appealed to an independent prophecy of Micah's (Mic. 3:12; Jer. 26:17, 18). The discourses before us therefore did not exist in Jeremiah's day, and are not Isaiah's" (Dav. Int. iii., p. 40). Now it is true that an appeal was made by some of Jeremiah's friends to the prophecy of Micah, and the conduct of Hezekiah and the people of his days, to repel the malice of those who sought to put him to death in these earnest words—"Did Hezekiah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the Lord, and besought the Lord, and the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls." From this incident it is inferred that the later prophecies were not then in existence, or else an appeal would have been made to them also in defence of Jeremiah. A very strange argument! For if it has any force, it would prove the non-existence of the earlier prophecies, admitted to be Isaiah's, and not of the later, whose authenticity is denied. For in Isa. 3:25, 26; 6:9-12; 27:9-11; 32:11-14; 39:5-7, we have repeated predictions of the desolation of the land and exile of the people, and in the last a distinct announcement of the deportation to Babylon. On the other hand, the later

prophecies predict only comfort and delivery to Zion, and judgments on Babylon and the Chaldeans.

On whatever side we pursue the inquiry, if only it be thorough and complete, the external and internal evidence, each of them full, various and decisive, conspires to prove the genuineness and real Isaian authorship of these later prophecies. The repeated testimony of the apostles and of the Lord of glory Himself, in the opening of His great mission at Nazareth, ought to settle the question, and dispel every doubt, among all who call themselves His disciples. But it is well to see that the internal evidence keeps pace with the external, and confirms the unity of the whole Book by an amount of proof which becomes clearer, deeper and fuller the further the inquiry is pursued. The adverse opinion does not rest, as sometimes alleged, on superior accuracy of Hebrew scholarship, but on the concurrence, in a small number of celebrated critics, of great technical knowledge of Hebrew grammar, with an entire lack of the logical instinct, and of all insight into the real harmonies and relations of the work they undertake to dissect. Their skill and learning reach only to the husk and mere exterior of the prophecies, while they seem wholly blind as to the substance of the whole. The result is what has been fitly called "the theory of despair." The book, in their hands, becomes a mere cento from various writers, all unknown but one, of dates ranging through three centuries, and thrown together without order, method or unity of any kind.

The denial of Isaiah's authorship is not at all confined to the later prophecies (chaps. 40-66). It includes further all these passages: chaps. 2:1-4; (12:1-6, Ewald); 13, 14:1-23; 15, 16, 21:1-10, 11-15; 23, 24, 27, 34, 35, 36-39, that is, eighteen chapters or parts of chapters out of thirty-nine. Thus out of sixty-six chapters there are only twenty-two, or just one third, of which the entire authorship is conceded to Isaiah. Two thirds are held to be spurious, and falsely ascribed to him. Out of 1304 verses, those of which the genuineness is allowed are only 524, or exactly two parts in five. The rest are assigned to four or five pseudo-Isaiahs, whose names, character and residence are wholly unknown.

It is needless to waste words on the comparisons in these criticisms between the style of the true Isaiah and the alleged defects of his various counterfeits. To those who are convinced, both on external and internal grounds, that all

are his alike, they are wearisome and trifling. To those who believe that they are all messages of truth and wisdom from the living God to sinful men, it is hard to say whether the eulogies or the censures with which they alternate are the more repulsive and painful. But there is one remark forcibly suggested by the whole drift and character of the negative criticism. Starting from the principle that real prophetic foresight is impossible, or has never been vouchsafed at all, unless shrewd guesses at what is likely to happen within a year or two is to be dignified with that name, the whole Book of Isaiah becomes a riddle, incapable of any key, and baffles all the efforts of mere learning, however great, to account for the phenomena. The parts have to be shifted up and down, to meet the exigencies of a false theory, till confusion becomes worse confounded, and every fresh critic, working on this unbelieving assumption, makes a fresh guess, and introduces some new complication. The conclusion finally reached is that the book is "an aggregate of unauthentic pieces accumulating by degrees to its present extent. That he spent the eve of his life in committing them to writing or arranging them after they were written is highly improbable, else he would not have left them without any observable plan. No organic unity can be pointed out in them. No principle of arrangement appears." Surely we have here one illustration of the prophet's own words, in describing the unhappy state of those who have light, and will not use it. "We grope for the wall like the blind, and grope as if we had no eyes; we stumble at noon-day as in the night." The real structure is beautifully simple, and the harmony of method and outline complete. The chapters of history which separate the two portions distinguish them, as the New Testament is distinguished from the Old, but only so as to reveal more plainly, to thoughtful minds, the deep unity of the whole message. As the law prepares for the Gospel, the burdens and woes prepare the way for rich comfort and abundant promise. All the tones of threatening converge, in the first part, on the Assyrian desolation and defiance (chaps. 36, 37), and all the messages of hope and promise diverge from chap. 39 and its warning of the Captivity in Babylon. The solemn voice at the opening, "Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth! I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me," finds its gracious reversal in the later voice of mercy, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people, saith your God."

Thus the whole book is a miniature Bible, where the law is unfolded in the earlier, and the Gospel largely and brightly anticipated in the later prophecies, while the grand crisis of Zion's travail and deliverance lies between them, and unites them into one complete message of mingled warning, hope and Divine consolation. *Birks.*

The extended citations upon this vital question of the unity of Isaiah have been selected from the highest sources, that the intelligent

reader may apprehend the main points in refutation of the modern doctrine of a dual or multiple authorship. We further commend the treatment of the question by Dr. J. Addison Alexander (*Later Prophecies*, pp. xi.-xl.); Canon Rawlinson (*Pulpit Com.*, pp. xxii.-xxvii.); W. Kay (*Bible, or Speaker's Com.*, pp. 7-18); Nägelsbach (*Lange*, pp. 13-25); Auberlen (*Div. Rev.*, pp. 82-86); Hengstenberg (*Kitto's Bib. Dictionary*); Oehler (*O. T. Theology*); Barth (*Chron. Com.*), and Kennedy (*Unity of Isaiah*). B.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XL.

40:1, 2 COMFORT ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; that she hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

- 3 The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the LORD, make
4 straight in the desert a high way for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every
5 mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough
6 places plain: and the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together:
7 for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. The voice of one saying, Cry. And one said,
8 What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the
9 field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the breath of the LORD bloweth upon
10 it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our
11 God shall stand for ever.
- 12 O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain: O thou that
13 tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid;
14 say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come as a
15 mighty one, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his recom-
16 pence before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs in his
17 arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that give suck.
- 18 Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the
19 span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in
20 scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the spirit of the LORD, or being his
21 counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and
22 taught him in the path of judgement, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the
23 way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as
24 the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And
25 Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All
26 the nations are as nothing before him; they are counted to him less than nothing, and van-
27 ish. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? The
28 graven image, a workman melted it, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and cast-
29 eth for it silver chains. He that is too impoverished for such an oblation chooseth a tree that
30 will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to set up a graven image, that shall
31 not be moved. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the
32 beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth
33 upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth
34 out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: that bringeth

24 princes to nothing ; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they have not been planted ; yea, they have not been sown ; yea, their stock hath not taken root in the earth : moreover he bloweth upon them, and they wither, and the whirlwind taketh them away as
25 stubble. To whom then will ye liken me, that I should be equal to *him* ? saith the Holy
26 One. Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number : he calleth them all by name ; by the greatness of his might, and for that he is strong in power, not one is lacking.

27 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my
28 judgement is passed away from my God ? Hast thou not known ? hast thou not heard ? the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is
29 weary ; there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint ; and to
30 him that hath no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
31 and the young men shall utterly fall : but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run, and not be weary ; they shall walk, and not faint.

Chap. 40. The earlier prophecies have closed with the message, "Say to them of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not ! behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God, He will come and save you." These later visions open here with a prediction of the fulfilment of this Divine command. Their first chapter is a voice of comfort to the fearful-hearted, because the Lord is at hand, as the Good Shepherd, to save and bless His people. The threatenings of the law are replaced by the promises of the Gospel. The key-note of all these later prophecies is Divine consolation to the mourners in Zion. *Birks.*

The great and joyful thought, central in this chapter, is that *God is coming* in some signal manifestations of power and grace and in fulfilment of promise. For this let His people be comforted (verses 1, 2) ; let His way be prepared (verses 3-5) ; for however frail all men and all human things are, God's word is sure and abiding (verses 6-8). Let evangelists proclaim to all the cities of Judah that God is coming (verse 9) ; with great strength (verse 10) ; and yet with no less wonderful tenderness and compassion (verse 11). None so great as He (verse 12), nor any so wise as to have taught Him (verses 13, 14) ; for all the nations even are as nothing before Him and all the world could not make an adequate sacrifice (verses 15-17). Shall God be compared to a graven image, curiously wrought with human skill, by human fingers (verses 18-20) ? He who made the world, who spread out the heavens, who shapes the destinies of nations—is not He the mighty God, able to fulfil every word of His promise (verses 21-26) ? Why then should His people think He has forgotten either them, or His cause on earth ? For He is never weary or faint, but on the contrary always has strength

and succor to give to the needy (verses 27-31).
H. C.

Jerusalem is regarded as in ruins (cf. chap. 44 : 26-28 ; 51 : 3 ; 52 : 9 ; 58 : 12) ; the land is waste and desolate (63 : 18) ; the city and the Temple are destroyed (64 : 9-11). Their deliverance is about to take place and their captivity about to end, and the people about to be restored to their own land (chaps. 44 : 28 ; 58 : 12 ; 60 : 10 ; 65 : 9). In this situation, the prophet is directed to address words of consolation to the oppressed and long-captive Jews, and to assure them that their captivity is about to close. Jerusalem—now in ruins—was to be assured that the end of her desolation was near, for that an ample punishment had been taken for all her sins.

The prophet next represents the deliverance which would be accomplished under an image taken from the march of earthly kings (verses 3-8). The voice of a herald is heard in the wilderness making proclamation, that every obstacle should be removed, that Jehovah might return to Zion conducting His people. As He had conducted them from the land of Egypt, so He was about to conduct them from Babylon, and to appear again in Jerusalem and in the Temple. Between Babylon and Jerusalem there was an immense tract of country which was a pathless desert. Through this land the people would naturally be conducted ; and the voice of the herald is heard demanding that a highway should be made—in the manner of a herald who preceded an army, and who required valleys to be filled, and roads to be constructed, over which the monarch and his army might pass with ease and safety. It is to be observed that the *main* thing here is not that *the people* should return, and a way for them be made, but that Jehovah was about to return to Jeru-

saalem, and that the pathway should be made for Him. He was to be their leader and guide, and this was the principal source of comfort in their return; the principal event which was to give joy—that the glory of Jehovah was again about to be seen in Zion that had been so long desolate. In this the Holy Spirit, who directed and inspired the prophet, *purposely* suggests language that would be applicable to a far more important event, when the herald of the Messiah should announce His coming. The main thing which the voice was to cry is represented in verses 6-8. That was, that Jehovah was faithful to His promises, and that His predictions would be certainly fulfilled. Everything else would fade away—the grass would wither, the flower would fail, and the people would die—but the word of Jehovah would be unailing, and this would be manifest alike in the release of the people from Babylon, and in the coming of the Messiah.

The messenger that brought these glad tidings to Zion, or Jerusalem, is exhorted to announce the happy news to the remaining cities of Judah—to go to an eminence—to lift up the voice—and to announce that their God had come (verse 9).

In verses 10, 11 the assurance is given that their God would come. He would come “with a strong hand”—almighty, and able to save; He would come able to reward His people; He would come as a tender and gentle shepherd, regarding especially the weak and feeble of His people—language alike applicable to God who should conduct the people from exile to their own land, and to the Messiah—though more strikingly and completely fulfilled in the latter.

The mention of the *omnipotence* of Jehovah, who was about to conduct His people to their own land, and to come Himself to Zion, leads the prophet into a most sublime description and His power, majesty and glory, the object of which seems to be to induce them to put entire confidence in Him (verses 12-17). This omnipotence, majesty and glory is set forth in most elevated and glowing language. God measures the waters in the hollow of His hand; He measures the heavens with a span; He measures the dust of the earth, and weighs the mountains (verse 12). None has counselled or can counsel Him—His understanding is superior to that of all creatures (verses 13, 14). The nations before Him are as a drop of a bucket, and as the small dust of the balance, and as nothing (verses 15, 17). All the vast forests of Lebanon and all the beasts that roam there

would not be sufficient to constitute a burnt offering that should be a proper expression of His majesty and glory (verse 16).

From this statement of the majesty and glory of God, the prophet infers the folly of idolatry, and shows the absurdity of attempting to form an image or likeness of God, and the certainty that all who trusted in idols should be destroyed as the stubble is swept away by the whirlwind (verses 18-25).

And another inference of the prophet, and the main one which he designed to draw, is, that the people should put confidence in God (verses 26-31). They should trust Him who had such power; they should believe that He was able to save them; they should wait on Him who alone could renew their strength (verses 26-31). The entire scope and design of the chapter, therefore, is to induce them to put their reliance in God, who was about to come to vindicate His people, and who would assuredly accomplish all His predictions and promises. *Barnes.*

1-10. How majestically this great half of the Book of Isaiah opens with these mysterious voices! Other prophecies are wont to begin with symbolic visions, but here the ear takes the place of the eye; and instead of forms and flashing lights, which need to be translated, the prophet hears words, the impressiveness of which is heightened by the absence of any designation of the speakers. This much is clear, that the first words are God's, addressed to the prophets. They are the key-note of the whole. Israel is comforted in the assurance that her trial is ended and her sin purged. Then there is silence, broken by a voice to which no personality is attached, the herald and forerunner of the coming King and God. When the echoes of it have died away, another is heard, commanding yet another unnamed to “cry,” and in response to the latter's asking what is to be the burden of His message, bidding him peal out the frailty of man and the eternal vigor of the word of the Lord, which assures its own fulfillment. Then comes a longer pause. The way has been prepared, the coming God has come; He has set up His throne in the restored Jerusalem, and His glory is seen upon her. So there rings out from unnamed lips the stirring command to the city, thus visited by the indwelling God, to proclaim the glad tidings with a voice, the strength of which shall correspond to their gladness and certainty.

1. God speaks and bids His servants speak. That is a wonderfully tender word with which the silence and sadness of exile are broken.

The inmost meaning of God's voice is ever comfort. What a world of yearning love there is, too, in the two little words "my" and "your"! The exiles are still His; He who has hidden His face from them so long is still theirs. And what was true of them is true of us; for sin may separate us from God, but it does not separate Him from us, and He still seeks to make us recognize the imperishable bond, which itself is the ground of both our comfort and of His will that we should be comforted. A. M.

2. This exhortation affords a key to the whole prophecy, as being consolatory in its tone and purpose. Jerusalem is here put for the Church or chosen people, whose metropolis it was, and for whose sake the place itself was precious in the sight of God. A.

As the very first words go deep into the meaning of all God's voices, and unveil the permanence of His relation of love even to sinful and punished men, so the next disclose the tender manner of His approach to us, and prescribe the tone for all His true servants, "Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem," with loving words, which may win her love; for is she not the bride of Jehovah, fallen though she be? And is not humanity the beloved of Jesus, in whom God's heart is unveiled that our hearts may be won? How shall human voices be softened to tenderness worthy of the message which they carry? Only by dwelling near enough to Him to catch the echoes and copy the modulations of His voice, as some birds are taught sweeter notes than their own. The prophet's charge is laid upon all who would speak of Christ to men. Speak to the heart, not to the head, not to the conscience only. God beseeches in the person of His "ambassadors." The substance of the message may well find its way to the heart; for it is the assurance that the long, hard service of the appointed term of exile is past, that the sin which brought it about is forgiven, and, more wonderful and gracious still, that God's mercy reckons that the ills which followed on faithlessness have more than expiated it. We need not seek for any other explanation of these startling words than the exuberance of the Divine pity, which "doth not willingly afflict." The Divine voice bids His prophets proclaim that Jehovah comes to set us all free, to end the weary bondage, and to exact no more punishment for sins. A. M.

That her warfare is accomplished.

Her period of toilsome trial and suffering, here compared to a protracted term of military ser-

vice, is at length over. This looks forward to the end of the distresses and sorrows of the people of God, and may be regarded as having special reference to the termination of that great calamity, which was then impending and was predicted in the immediately preceding chapter (Isa. 39:6). This must come, but it shall not last forever; it shall have an end, which is already fixed. This clause may be regarded as expanded in chaps. 40-48, which deals largely with the overthrow of Babylon and the deliverance of Judah. "*That she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins.*" "Double" is not here to be understood numerically, but as meaning "largely" or "abundantly." The reference is not to ample punishment, as Jer. 16:18; 17:18, but rich and exuberant blessings, as Isa. 61:7; Zech. 9:12. This looks forward to the time when God's overflowing grace shall more than have made up to her all that she had endured and deserved. "For all her sins" would be more exactly rendered "in all her sins;" that is, in the midst of them, or in spite of them. This corresponds to the glowing picture presented of the future of Zion in chaps. 58-66 (see particularly chap. 60), which the Lord shall bring to pass, not according to her desert, but according to His own rich mercy and grace. W. H. G.

3. The call is to prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness of human sin, by raising up the cast-down by reason of transgressions or sorrows, to subdue lofty thoughts and self-sufficiency, by humble self-abnegation, to make the "crooked things" or the "rugged things" straight or smooth, and the rough ground where heights were tumbled on heights a deep valley, by forsaking evil. The moral preparation, not the physical, is meant. A. M.—Babylon is not named nor the Exile, nor the restoration to Palestine. On the other hand, the New Testament refers this passage directly and explicitly to the preaching of John the Baptist, as the great work which was to prepare the way for the Messiah. Remarkably the three earlier Gospel historians, Matthew, Mark and Luke, have but one voice to this point, and that is entirely explicit. H. C.

Prepare ye the way. As every Eastern traveller has learned, roads, in our sense of the term, are unknown. The feet of camels and horses are the only road-makers in the East; and generation after generation walks round the same boulder, makes a circuit round the same hollow, no man ever dreaming of cutting, levelling, banking up or draining a road, although the remains of the paved and levelled

highways of those master engineers, the Romans, may be seen at every turn. But let a sultan or a shah propose a royal progress, and then all is changed. Pioneers are hurriedly sent forward along the whole route; the neighboring population is at once impressed, and compelled to work without pay, the stones are gathered out, the dry watercourses are filled in, the rocks are scarped, the sides of the hills are cut, and the track levelled and guarded. No obstacle delays the monarch's advance. I myself have seen exactly this preparation made, and the road cut and levelled from Jaffa to Jerusalem, to receive the visit of the Prince Imperial of Austria. But it lasts not long. The first rain washes all this loose earth away, and the old rocks and watercourses reappear.

Tristram.

This is the very labor by which we are required to prepare His way. This is the very work which His Church must do. She must cast up the highway for the progress of the Gospel by her own efforts, self-denial and prayer. She has no questions to ask but what is the will of the Lord; that being known, to be deterred by difficulties is to renounce her faith, and to withhold her sacrifices is to be unworthy of the office to which her Lord has commissioned her. *Thornwell.*

The prophet looked beyond the redemption of Israel from captivity to the redemption of the nations from the God of this world, from the powers of darkness, through the coming of Christ. What might seem impossible to short-lived men and to human agencies, that wither like the grass, was made sure by the enduring word of the Lord; and centuries later, when Jerusalem had forever lost her independent nationality, and was held as a vassal of Rome, the voice of John the Baptist was heard in the wilderness of Judea, crying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord;" and her King came, whose triumph, begun in suffering, is going on to possess the earth till "all flesh shall see it together." J. P. T.

5. The simple meaning is, that when the way should be prepared, the glory of God would be universally displayed; a promise too extensive to be fully verified in that event or period of history. A.—This "revealing of the glory of the Lord" is that which was made by the incarnation, the earthly life, the Divine teachings and the vicarious death of the Son of God. For this is distinctively and superlatively the great revealing of God's glory to men—far more signal and complete than any other, and therefore, with high probability, this is the

manifestation of God which is primarily in view here. The teachings of the New Testament on this point are exceedingly full and explicit. Remarkably all its leading writers concur in describing the incarnation of Jesus as being "*God manifested in the flesh*," and as a revealing of the glory of God.

6-8. The point made in these three verses is that God's word of promise is sure of accomplishment. Men may fail, but God never. The generations of men pass away; there are no passing generations in the eternal life of God. Men may prove untrue, and for this reason their words may fail; but God is forever truthful, and therefore both fully disposed and richly able to make good every word He hath spoken. 1 Pet. 1:24, 25 quotes portions of the passage before us, and adds, "And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you;" that is, he takes this "word" in its broad sense, comprehending those great spiritual truths, fundamental to salvation, which the Spirit employs in regeneration. He manifestly contemplates the truths, not as promises, but as facts. The prophet thinks of them as promise. Thus those very Gospel truths which were facts to Peter were promise to Isaiah. They dawned on the race first in the light and form of promise. In the personal advent of the Messiah they were fulfilled, and then became realized facts; the Gospel word preached everywhere. Peter and Isaiah, therefore, think of the same "word of the Lord," and since we know that Peter's word is the Gospel, we infer with certainty that Isaiah's word also refers to the great truths of the Gospel. H. C.

Amid all the changes on earth, all the revolutions of empires, all the passing away of kingdoms, God is the same, and His promises are unfulfilling. We see the grass wither at the return of autumn or in the drought; we see the flower of the field lose its beauty and decay; we see man confident in his strength, rejoicing in his vigor and his health, cut down in an instant; we see cities fall, and kingdoms lose their power and vanish from among nations, but the word of God is the same. He changes not. He presides in all these revolutions; sits calm and unmoved amid all these changes; and carries forward His great designs. Not one of His promises shall fail; and at the end of all the changes which human things shall undergo, Jehovah, the God of His people, will be the same; and they will be enabled to say that all His promises have been fulfilled.

Barnes.

The repetition of the theme of man's frailty

gives emphasis to the contrast of the unchangeable stability of God's word. Everything lovely, bright and vigorous in humanity wilts and dies. One thing alone remains fresh from age to age—the uttered will of Jehovah. His breath kills and makes alive. It withers the creatural, and it speaks the undying word. This message is to follow those others which tell of God's merciful promises, that trembling hearts may not falter when they see all created stays sharing the common lot, but may rest assured that God's promises are as good as God's facts, and so may hope when all things visible would preach despair. It was given to hearten confidence in the prophecy of a future revelation of the glory of God. It remains with us to hearten confidence in a past revelation, which will stand unshaken, whatever forces war against it. Its foes and its friends are alike short-lived as the summer's grass. The defences of the one and the attacks of the other are being antiquated while being spoken; but the bare word of God, the record of the incarnate word, who is the true revelation of the glory of God, will stand forever, "And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached to you." A. M.

7, 8. The flower fades and falls off the plant, but it does not altogether vanish. Some part of it, larger or smaller according to the species, remains behind to form the nucleus of the fruit. In every case the lower portion of the central and most important part of the blossom is left, and it is out of it that the fruit is formed. The fruit, in the language of the botanist, is only the enlarged and matured pistil. Yes, the flower as a flower fades, but there is a something in it, and developed by it, which abides. The ripe fruit has the beauty of the blossom, but it has a great deal more. And so is it with these fleeting lives of ours. The kingdom of heaven is within every true human life. The permanent derives something of its grace and value from that which is transient. It takes unto itself and perpetuates all that was good and true and useful in the fading flower. The flower fades, but the glory of it lives—that word of God, of which it was the inspired but silent teacher, abideth an incorruptible seed in the soul that received it and turned it into fruit. All the circumstances of our natural life will soon fade away and disappear. But the moral discipline which they afforded us, the virtues and the graces which they helped to produce and develop, will survive as a part of our being here and hereafter. *Macmillan.*

Since John wrote in his cell at Patmos, and Paul preached in his own hired house at Rome,

the world has been turned upside down; all old things have passed away; all things on earth have changed but one. Rivalling in fixedness, and more than rivalling in brightness, the stars that saw our world born and shall see it die, that rejoiced in its birth and shall be mourners* at its burial, the word of our God stands forever. Time, that weakens all things else, has but strengthened the impregnable position of the believer's faith, and hope, and confidence. And as, year by year, the tree adds another ring to its circumference, every age has added the testimony of its events to this great truth, "The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord shall endure forever." *Guthrie.*—The word of Jehovah takes its character from Him. It is immutable, it is enduring. Nothing prevails against it. Satan has attempted its perversion. He assailed it in the garden when the first Adam was tempted successfully; he assailed it in the wilderness when the last Adam was tempted unsuccessfully; but it was stronger than he. Man has assailed it in his unbelief, levelling at it the shafts of ridicule, or smiting it with the sword of an unbelieving criticism, or burning it in the flames of a malignant hostility, yet it has continued unharmed, living and mighty as ever. And so it shall continue everlastingly. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away." Over it, as over Him, years have no power. *N. W. Wells.*

The word is its own best evidence. It will correct all the misrepresentation of its foes and supplement the inadequate defences of its friends. Amid all the changes of attacks that have their day and cease to be, amid all the changes of our representations of its endless fulness, it will live. Schools of thought that assail and defend it pass, but it abides. Of both enemy and friend it is true, "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof passeth away." How antique and ineffectual the pages of the past generations of either are compared with the ever-fresh youth of the Bible, which, like the angels, is the youngest and is the oldest of books. The world can never lose it; and notwithstanding all assaults, we may rest upon *His* assurance, whose command is prophecy, when He says, "Write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come forever and ever." A. M.

Over the whole realm of knowledge the Scripture lifts its sceptre, and the star of our Lord is as truly the guiding light of science as of faith. The truths of men are to be encom-

passed, they are to be illumined by the truth in Scripture, and from it they are to learn what, without it, they cannot know. For there are truths that science sublimely believes; "it labors in their light and journeys in their hope," but it cannot prove them; it is ever drawing nearer to them, but it cannot teach them; these truths the Bible makes certain. The Bible is to be harmonized with itself alone; that is, so far as possible, its truth is to be seen in its unity. Vainly into comparison with it is brought anything else, for it is written "God hath magnified His word above all His name." The Bible has outlasted forms of society, systems of science. It will outlive them all. Thousands of years are gone since it was written "the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, but the word of God shall stand forever." Its everlasting truth is of another duration than pertains to the material worlds whose years are numbered. *F. W. Upham.*

The singleness of truth constitutes the basis of its exclusiveness. It claims for itself, exclusively and without rival, the faith and obedience of mankind; a claim that is exclusive because it is just, and that could not be consistent without requiring thus the rejection of all error. These exclusive claims are often misrepresented as involving the most odious intolerance and illiberality. But in truth there is no more a possibility of the existence of several true religions than there is of the existence of more than one God. From the one Jehovah there can emanate but the one truth—developed, indeed, in different degrees at different ages, in Judaism the bud, in Christianity the expanded flower—but essentially, and in all ages, the one unchanged and unchangeable religion, revealing for man the sinner's salvation, through an atonement and mediator of Divine appointment. *Wm. R. Williams.*

The Gospel has been tried by the young and the old, the wise and the weak, the cultured and the untought, by men and women under every variety of climate and civilization, in every stage of guilt and innocence, and all have found it better than it promised to be, and its Lord more fully accredited to be the Christ of God. This testimony is every day repeated in myriads of prayers that go up before God. It is warbled and sung in the praises of throngs of men, in the sacredness of solitude and under the inspiration of worship. It is attested by the peace of God that is written on the brows of myriads of life-long sufferers, and by the unutterable joy which has looked forth from the eyes of multitudes as they have wrestled

with death. The disciples of Christ are divided on many points, but on one point their testimony is united, that He has proved Himself to be nearer and better than they could have expected with the measure of faith and love which they have given Him. *N. Porter.*

There is no book so real as the Bible, a book of realities grand, glorious, palpable, terrible. Its God is a real, living God. Its law is a reality. Its spiritual world is a reality. Its threatenings against evil-doers are realities; its promises and hopes are realities; its salvation is a reality; its life and death, its resurrection and judgment, its heaven and hell are realities. And these realities have an object. The Bible aims throughout to make men better. Perfection of character is its aim; and the revelation of God in His holiness and His mercy, in His law and His redemption is its means. The Bible is a sublime symphony framed about the theme of man's reconciliation with God. The theme runs through different keys and various movements, but the listening ear catches it again and again; it emerges from the chaos of the fall in the song of Moses, the servant of God; the harps of David and Isaiah give it a distincter and sublimer utterance; the angels breaking the silence of the midnight air chant it over Bethlehem; it rises more clear and waxes more loud in the doxologies of Paul and the choruses of John until it rolls through the arches of heaven in one magnificent choral of earth and sky, the song of Moses and the Lamb. *J. P. T.*

9. Zion or Jerusalem herself is represented as the bearer of good tidings to the towns of Judah. This construction is recommended by the beautiful personification, which it introduces, of the holy city as the seat of the true religion and the centre of the Church. The office here ascribed to it is the same that is recognized in chap. 2:3: "*The law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*" Not only in the restoration from captivity or in the personal advent of the Saviour, but in every instance of the Lord's return to His forsaken people, it is the duty of the Church to communicate as well as to receive the joyful tidings. A.—In the nature of the case God must first give the Gospel to Zion, and then require her to publish it. First, angels brought the glad news from heaven; then Jesus and His disciples took it up to publish, first in order to all the cities of Judah, and then, by His Divine behest, over all the world, to every creature. A grand, magnificent summons is this to preach the glad tidings of the Divine Saviour

come at last ! The ages had been waiting in anxious expectation and long-deferred hope ; now let the daughters of Zion themselves become evangelists, and ascending the highest hill-tops of the land lift up their voice with strength and proclaim, " Behold your God ! " H. C.

9, 10. The prophecy refers to the Church. It sets forth her highest office as being the proclamation of her indwelling King. The possession of Christ makes the Church the evangelist for the world ; for it gives the capacity and the impulse as well as the obligation. Every Christian has this command binding on him by the fact of his having Christ. The command sets forth the bold clearness which should mark the herald's call, " Lift up thy voice with strength." Bated breath is no fit vehicle for God's Gospel. There are too many of God's heralds who are always apologizing for their message, and seeking to reconcile it with popular opinions. We are all apt to speak truth less confidently because it is denied ; but, while it is needful to speak with all gentleness and in meekness to them that oppose, it is cowardly, as well as impolitic, to let one tremor be heard in our tones, though a world should deny our message. The command tells the substance of the Church's message. Its heart is the proclamation of the manifested God. To gaze on Jesus is to behold God. That God is made known in the twin glories of power and gentleness. He comes as a strong one. His dominion rests on His own power, and on no human allies. His reign is retributive, and that not merely as penally recompensing evil, but as rewarding the faith and hope of those who waited for Him. The paradox of the Gospel, which points to a poor, weak man, dying in the dark, on a cross, and says, " Behold the great power of God ! " is anticipated in this prophecy. The triumphant paradox of the apostle is shadowed here : " We preach Christ crucified, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." A. M.

11. This is the earliest distinct application of this figure of the shepherd to the Messiah. It stands here in its blended beauty and strength, exceedingly rich in its points of analogy and tenderly precious in its great moral lessons. To the Jews, familiar with all the details and therefore comprehending perfectly the significance of shepherd life, this comparison must have been intensely rich and expressive. Then our Lord appropriates to Himself this beautifully descriptive figure, saying with special reference to these prophecies, " I am *the good shep-*

herd ;" not merely, I am a shepherd, and not merely, I am *the* shepherd ; but yet more specifically, " I am *the good shepherd* ;" the same whose good qualities were so fully presented by Isaiah. H. C.—And what can fill us with a loftier inspiration or lift us into a more sublime and blessed confidence than this, the fact that Christ, the Eternal Shepherd, has a personal recognition of us, leading us on, by name, and calling us to follow. No matter whether He calls us into ways of gain or of suffering, of honor or of scorn ; it is all one, with such a leader before us. Nay, if we go down to sound the depths of sorrow, and ennoble the pains of sacrifice, what are these but a more inspiring and more Godlike call, since He is now our leader even here. *Bushnell.*

No description could more beautifully describe the character of the Redeemer. In the New Testament He is often described as a shepherd, tender and kind, and regarding the welfare of all His flock, and as ready to give His life for them (John 10 : 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15 ; Heb. 13 : 20 ; 1 Pet. 2 : 25 ; 5 : 4). We are here strikingly reminded that He has a special solicitude for the feeble and infirm, and that they will be the objects of His tender care ; and that He feels a particular interest in the young. He knows their feebleness ; He is acquainted with their temptations ; He sees the importance of their being trained up with care ; and He looks with deep interest, therefore, on all the efforts made to guard them from the ways of sin, and to train them up for His service. *Barnes.*

12. The sudden transition is most heart-stirring and impressive. How great ! how wise ! how thoughtful and constant in love is the Lord, the Good Shepherd, who is to come ! The message opens with a charge to comfort, and ends with a promise of strength restored and comfort attained. *Birks.*

This sublimely grand portrayal of God as Almighty and All-wise continues nearly to the close of this chapter, and then comes to its point of practical application in the great truth, *Almighty to give strength and succor to His people*, and therefore a legitimate object of supreme trust. The questions in this passage, " *Who hath measured,*" etc., carry their own answer with resistless force, *None but God !* What conceptions are these of the vastness of His power and of the infinite ease with which He controls the material universe ! H. C.

Some astronomers have computed that there are no less than 75,000,000 of suns in this universe. The fixed stars are all suns, having, like our sun, numerous planets revolving round

them. The solar system, or that to which we belong, has about thirty planets, primary and secondary, belonging to it. The circular field of space which it occupies is in diameter 3,600,000,000 of miles; and that which it controls much greater. That sun which is nearest neighbor to ours is called Sirius, distant from our sun about 22,000,000,000 of miles. Now, if all the fixed stars are as distant from each other as Sirius is from our sun; if the solar system be the average magnitude of all the systems of the 75,000,000 of suns, what imagination can grasp the immensity of creation? Every sun of the 75,000,000 controls a field of space about 10,000,000,000 of miles in diameter. Who can survey a plantation containing 75,000,000 of circular fields, each 10,000,000,000 of miles? Such, however, is one of the plantations of Him who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance; Him who, sitting upon the orbit of the earth, stretches out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. *Anon.*

It has been proved by Professor Faraday that it requires more electricity to decompose a drop of water than to charge a thundercloud. What a revelation of power we have here! In every drop of water there is a constant striving of the elements to escape; they are exerting a force to break the bonds that unite them, which can be measured only by the power of concentrated thunderbolts, and yet this immense force is kept in check by a force of equal power, and so exactly balanced that not the slightest disturbance can occur. When, now, I reflect that this chemical force has produced a result which all human strength, aided by the appliances of modern art, has been unable to effect—that in every particle of water the force is still acting, so that every rain-drop which falls animates the river or swells the ocean, is a silent monitor of human weakness, I am overwhelmed by that mystery in nature, which here as elsewhere ever points upward to the Infinite, and thus silently teaches that the mighty influence which binds the atoms of the rain-drop is merely the manifestation of His ceaseless power who holdeth “the waters in the hollow of His hand.” *Cooke.*

12, 13. Both these verses are designed alike to set forth His supremacy and independence, by describing Him as measuring and regulating all things, while Himself incapable either of measurement or regulation. *A.*

15. Here is still another view of the greatness of God. The prophet first compared Him with the universe of matter, in which the ocean waters are to Him only a handful; next with the universe of created mind, challenging the whole of it to produce a thought new to God, or a suggestion that could add to His wisdom; and next, he measures God (so to speak) against the *nations* of men. They are to Him only as the drop hanging from the bucket—a mere drop of water; or as the small dust whose weight on the scales is inappreciable. *H. C.*

16. “*And Lebanon is not enough for burning, and its beasts are not enough for a sacrifice.*” The supremacy and majesty of God are now presented by expressions borrowed from the Mosaic ritual. He is not only independent of the power, but also of the good-will of His creatures. This general allusion to oblation, as an act of homage or of friendship, suits the connection better than a specific reference to expiation. The insufficiency of these offerings is set forth not in a formal proposition, but by means of a striking individualization. For general terms He substitutes one striking instance, and asserts of that what might be asserted of the rest. If Lebanon could not suffice, what could? The imagery here used is justly described by Umbreit as magnificent: nature the temple; Lebanon the altar; its lordly woods the pile; its countless beasts the sacrifice.

18. “*And (now) to whom will ye liken God, and what likeness will ye compare to Him?*” The inevitable logical conclusion from the previous considerations is that God is one and that there is no other. From this, the prophet now proceeds to argue, that it is folly to compare God even with the most exalted creature, how much more with lifeless matter.

19. The verse contains a direct answer to the question in the one before it. What have you to set over against such a God? The image which an ordinary workman manufactures. This construction enables us to account for the position of *the image* at the beginning of the sentence, and for its having the definite article. *A.*

22-31. The true use of nature is to teach us to observe God in His works, and so to help our faith in the higher sphere of spiritual religion. But men pervert nature, on the one hand, to the displacement of God, by substituting its forces for His power, its laws for His Spirit; and on the other, to the degrading and caricaturing of the divinity through material objects of worship. The prophet, having exhibited, even to the verge of ridicule, the

folly and worthlessness of idolatry, and the emptiness and vanity of worldly rank and power, would have us regard the earth in the firmness of its foundations and the breadth of its circuit, the heavens in their widespread glory, the stars in their ordered beauty and majesty, as evidences of the inapproachable unity, power and dominion of God. But this everlasting Creator and Lord, whose nature no image could represent, whose understanding no philosophy could measure, will reveal Himself to the consciousness of those who humbly wait upon His pleasure, and will communicate to them of His wisdom and strength. The highest power of man exhausts itself by its own exertion; the freshest vigor, after a little, grows weary and faint, and must be renewed by rest. But the strength that the Lord imparts to the trusting soul never exhausts itself, nor tires him who exerts it. It is perpetually self-renewing. And he who by faith so uses this Divine power as to overcome the downward tendency of sense and sin will gain such freedom and vigor, that, as the eagle mounts to the sun, he will rise to the Source of all light and love. J. P. T.

23, 24. These verses add still another point in this magnificent comparison of the Omnipotent God with His various works. He has been compared with the material universe; with all nations; with graven images; with all the inhabitants of the earth; and now with their princes and judges. How easily can He reduce them to nothing; break down their power; lay their glory in the dust! Yea, ere they are planted and sown and ere they have taken firm root He only blows upon them, and they wither away.

25. Where we might expect some of those names of God which signify omnipotence, or perhaps power in combination with wisdom and majesty, these points being made specially prominent in this passage (verses 12-26), we really have neither of these, but this only—"the Holy One." H. C.

26. As a general reviews a numerous army, so "He bringeth out their host;" and by number, so that each one in their vast array is separately known. He discerns the character and the place of every star, and the part it has to fulfil in His vast scheme of creation. Night after night each one keeps its place, for thousands of years, and performs its own circuit in the heavens. The constancy of the laws of nature illustrates and confirms, but can never set aside, the dominion of God.

27. This wonderful greatness of the Most

High, revealed in His works, is now applied to strengthen and comfort His fearful-hearted people. However dark the clouds around them, one glimpse of His majesty, when joined with His promises, ought to banish all their fears. The repetition implies the frequency of their complaints, and the question itself, their folly. The birth-name, Jacob, and the covenant-name, Israel, are a secret appeal to the love of the Creator and the grace of the Redeemer. *Birks.*

28. The God whom the Bible discloses and the moral system which it reveals lose nothing when compared with the extent of nature or with the simplicity and majesty of her laws; they seem rather worthy to be enthroned upon and to preside over such an amazing domain. M. H.

28-31. This Almighty Lord, incapable of weariness Himself, is also the stay of His wearied people. All besides, however strong they may appear, are liable to exhaustion and decay. But the weakest, who resort to Him who is the Fountain of life, shall receive new life and vigor from His Divine fulness; shall run swiftly onward in their journey as pilgrims to a better land, and mount upward, in holy aspirations, toward heaven. The poor in spirit will be satisfied forever from the fulness of God. *Birks.*—Feeble are we? Yes, without God we are nothing. But what, by faith, every man may be God requires him to be. This is the only Christian idea of duty. Measure obligation by inherent ability! No, Christian obligation has a very different measure. It is measured by the power that God will give us, measured by the gifts and possible increments of faith. That only is Christian faith that lives in the power of faith; in that does its works, makes its sacrifices, sustains its hopes and measures its holy obligations. Almost everything a Christian is to do for his times and the sphere in which he lives transcends his ability, and the very greatness and joy of his experience consists in the fact that he is exalted above himself, and made a partaker in his works of a Divine power, as in his character of the Divine nature. He is a man who lives in God and by God is girded to his duties and his triumphs—God in nature, God in the Gospel, God in the Spirit, God in the plenitude of His promises. *Bushnell.*

30, 31. The best of human vigor will tire—that of young men in their prime, such as are chosen for war (the sense of the Hebrew), will by no means endure unremitting tension. But they that wait upon God, not here in the sense

of *service*, but of *trustful faith*, shall grow stronger. Through grace, in response to such faith, the Christian life goes on from strength to strength, from victory to other victories ever more yet greater, rising triumphant over successive temptations, and at last coming off more than conqueror through Him that hath loved and therefore never fails to help. The promise has ever been true. It has been found in the experience of thousands and tens of thousands, that by waiting on the Lord the heart has been invigorated; the faith has been confirmed; and the affections have been raised above the world. Strength has been given to bear trial without murmuring; to engage in arduous duty without fainting, and to pursue the perilous and toilsome journey of life without exhaustion. *Barnes.*

Here, on the one hand, is the boundless ocean of the Divine strength, unfathomable in its depth, full after all draughts, tideless and calm, in all its movement never troubled, in all its repose never stagnating; and on the other side is the empty aridity of our poor, weak natures. Faith opens these to the influx of that great sea, and "according to our faith," in the exact measure of our receptivity, does it enter our hearts. In itself the gift is boundless. It has no limit except the infinite fulness of the power which worketh in us. But in reference to our possession it is bounded by our capacity, and though that capacity enlarges by the very fact of being filled, and so every moment becomes greater through fruition, yet at each moment it is the measure of our possession, and our faith is the measure of our capacity. Our power is God's power in us, and our faith is the power with which we grasp God's power and make it ours. So then, in regard to God, our

faith is the condition of our being strengthened with might by His Spirit. A. M.

There is only one pledge for the permanence of any good thing that is in you—viz., that you bring it to God, and that you reserve it for God with that higher consecration which He only can give it—not now any more a virtue of this world, but a grace of the kingdom of heaven; and that you bring it to Him again and again, for indeed all your fresh springs must be in Him; and they that wait on Him, they, and they only, renew their strength, run and are not weary, walk and are not faint; they, and they only, bring forth fruit in old age to show that the Lord is upright, and that there is no unrighteousness in Him. *Trench.*

Devotion is not the end of Christian life; we wait upon God that we may renew our strength for noble service. In our eagerness to press within the temple to look upon the face of God we must not pass unheeding by the suffering ones who lie with appealing glance and voice outside the temple-gate. Visions of God which lead to no active service will soon die out. J. R. M.

Thus closes this wonderfully rich and beautiful chapter. Accepting it as revealing primarily and directly the opening scenes and the distinctive glories of the Gospel age, resting (so to speak) upon the assumed restoration from Babylon as the underlying conception in some of its figures, the whole becomes intensely graphic and luxuriantly rich in its revelations. The soul of the Gospel is the soul and the life of this chapter. Its great central truth is, *The Son of God becoming manifest in human flesh—the Redeemer and the saving strength of His trusting people.* H. C.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XLI.

- 41:1** KEEP silence before me, O islands ; and let the peoples renew their strength : let
 2 them come near ; then let them speak : let us come near together to judgement. Who hath
 raised up one from the east, whom he calleth in righteousness to his foot ? he giveth nations
 before him, and maketh him rule over kings ; he giveth them as the dust to his sword, as
 3 the driven stubble to his bow. He pursueth them, and passeth on safely ; even by a way
 4 that he had not gone with his feet. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations
 5 from the beginning ? I the LORD, the first, and with the last, I am he. The isles saw, and
 6 feared ; the ends of the earth trembled : they drew near, and came. They helped every one
 7 his neighbour ; and *every one* said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter en-
 couraged the goldsmith, *and* he that smootheth with the hammer him that smiteth the anvil,
 saying of the soldering, It is good : and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be
 moved.
 8 But thou, Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend ;
 9 thou whom I have taken hold of from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the corners
 thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee and not cast thee away ;
 10 fear thou not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am thy God : I will strengthen
 thee ; yea, I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteous-
 11 ness. Behold, all they that are incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded :
 12 they that strive with thee shall be as nothing, and shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and
 shalt not find them, even them that contend with thee : they that war against thee shall be as
 13 nothing, and as a thing of nought. For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, say-
 14 ing unto thee, Fear not ; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel ;
 15 I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will
 make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth : thou shalt thresh the mountains,
 16 and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind
 shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them : and thou shalt rejoice in the
 17 LORD, thou shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel. The poor and needy seek water and there
 is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst ; I the LORD will answer them, I the God of Israel
 18 will not forsake them. I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of
 the valleys : I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.
 19 I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree ; I
 20 will set in the desert the fir tree, the pine, and the box tree together : that they may see, and
 know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and
 the Holy One of Israel hath created it.
 21 Produce your cause, saith the LORD ; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of
 22 Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and declare unto us what shall happen : declare ye the
 former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them ;
 23 or shew us things for to come. Declare the things that are to come hereafter, that we may
 know that ye are gods : yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it
 24 together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought : an abomination is he that
 chooseth you.
 25 I have raised up one from the north, and he is come ; from the rising of the sun one that
 calleth upon my name : and he shall come upon rulers as upon mortar, and as the potter
 26 treadeth clay. Who hath declared it from the beginning, that we may know ? and before-
 time, that we may say, *He is* righteous ? yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none
 27 that sheweth, yea, there is none that heareth your words. *I first will say* unto Zion, Behold,
 28 behold them ; and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings. And when I
 look, there is no man ; even among them there is no counsellor, that, when I ask of them, can
 29 answer a word. Behold, all of them, their works are vanity *and* nought : their molten
 images are wind and confusion.

Chap. 41. Until the ends of Israel's national existence are accomplished, that existence must continue, in spite of hostile nations and their gods, who shall all perish sooner than the chosen people (verse 1-16). However feeble Israel may be in himself Jehovah will protect him, and raise up the necessary instruments for his deliverance and triumph (verses 17-29).

1. Having proved the impotence of idols in a direct address to Israel, Jehovah now summons the idolaters themselves to enter into controversy with Him. The challenge is a general one directed to the whole heathen world, and *islands* is a poetical variation for *lands* or at the most for maritime lands or sea-coasts. *Silence* in this connection implies attention or the fact of listening, which is expressed in Job 33:31. A.

2. It was God, the just avenger of His people, acting as the genius or personification of justice, who raised up Cyrus and gave him his great power. The last clause indicates the tremendous energy of his arms. God will make the nations as dust before his sword. Abruptly the first question, "Who raised up," etc., breaks off before it is fully expressed, and the Lord answers it by putting in the foreground the idea that His own avenging justice was aroused to bring out a mighty conqueror for the deliverance of His people. "Called him to His foot" is the Hebrew phrase for service and especially in war. H. C.

The Divine appointment, leading, protection and guidance were never more strongly manifested than in the case of Cyrus, whose career, to fulfil which he was raised up, was marked out for him before he was born. It is interesting to observe that in the prophecies of Isaiah there is a gradual preparation for the distinct production of Cyrus by name. In the thirteenth chapter, entitled "The Burden of Babylon," he and his warriors are produced as the ministers of the Lord's judgment upon Babylon, without being named and without Cyrus himself being characterized by any distinguishing epithet. But here he is indicated as "the righteous man out of the East," and in the final prophecy (chaps. 44-46) the Lord not only names Cyrus, but calls him His "shepherd," His "anointed" and "the man that executeth My counsel," forming, taken together, a splendid series of characterizing epithets, such as never in Scripture are given to any but the most illustrious of the Hebrew race. *Kitto*.

3. This the briefest possible history of the wars of Cyrus, pursuing his fleeing enemies

and still passing on with safety to himself, for no nation made an effective stand against him. The last clause expresses the amazing rapidity of his movements by saying that he did not seem to pass over the road with his feet, but rather to *fly*.

6, 7. Now the time has come for the idolatrous nations of the world to bring forward their idol gods and invoke them to show their prowess and to measure arms with the Almighty. H. C.—Both verses contain a sarcastic description of the vain appeal of the idolaters to the protection of their tutelary deities. The sarcasm consists in making the idolaters dependent upon idols, which are themselves dependent upon common workmen and the most trivial mechanical operations for their form and their stability. Hence the particular enumeration of the different artificers employed in the manufacture of these deities. A.

8-10. In verses 8 and 9 the Lord accosts His people and describes them, showing what He has done for them. In verse 10 He reaches the substance of what He would say—an exhortation to dismiss all fear and be assured that as God *had* helped them, so He would still. Verse 9 refers specially to God's calling the seed of Abraham out from among idolaters (see Josh. 24:2), gathering them from remote lands, Mesopotamia, or Egypt. H. C.

10-20. The scope of these verses is to silence the fears and encourage the faith of the servants of God in their distresses; perhaps it is intended, in the first place, for the support of God's Israel in captivity; but all that faithfully serve God, "through patience and comfort of this Scripture, may have hope." And it is addressed to Israel as a single person, that it might the more easily and readily be accommodated and applied by every Israelite indeed to himself. That is a word of caution, counsel and comfort, which is so often repeated, "Fear thou not;" and again (verse 13), "Fear not," and (verse 14), "Fear not, thou worm Jacob; fear not the threatenings of the enemy, doubt not the promises of thy God; fear not that thou shalt perish in thine affliction, or that the promise of thy deliverance shall fail." It is against the mind of God that His people should be a timorous people. H.

10. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee," here is an antidote for all fears. When tempted to *fret* because of withholdings or inflictions, or apparent inequalities of providence, let the words "Be not dismayed, for I am thy God," calm and satisfy the soul. And if faintness in sore trial or difficult service steals over the soul,

remember who hath said, "I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." *Cox.*

The soul which has such a relation to God as that God says to him, "I am *thy* God," can never die. The mere fact that between me and God, through His Spirit, there has come this close, intimate, marvellous connection, is the great guarantee of everlasting life. It is impossible that there should ever come the cessation and the interruption of that fellowship. All religion has immortality in it. God will not slay His own child. If the Spirit is mine here, then the spirit in which that Spirit dwells is gifted with immortality by its indwelling; and the Temple that God has entered shall never be desecrated or cast down.

Look at this twofold encouragement, "I am with thee and I am thy God," and "I will strengthen thee, help thee, and uphold thee." Look at the majesty with which the sovereign autocratic *I, I, I*, keeps rolling forth. God puts His own great being as a shelter and a breakwater between us and that great sea of danger without. Get behind that great Breakwater, for it is quiet riding within. *I, I, I*, My own magnificent personality, that is the only thing that can make you strong. Only one antagonist can master fear, and that is faith. And only one Being can evoke faith, and the old word has it in all its beauty and simplicity, "I will *trust*," and so I will not be afraid. If I trust I find out the "soul of goodness in the thing that is evil," and I cannot be afraid of what He sends me. "I will be with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God." And that is beautiful! A single man can lay hold of God, can put out an unpresumptuous hand and say, "I claim Thee for mine!" *A. M.*

What the soul needs is not occasional, but perpetual aid. Its wants never intermit, its enemies are always at hand, its temptations are omnipresent. The moment never comes when it can stand alone. Essential weakness is its own nature, separate from God. Its safety is in a wondrous capacity to be filled, inspired and energized by God. To be thus divinely possessed and used is its true life and power. But that the life and power may be continuous, the Divine indwelling must be perpetual. *W. W. Patton.*

Those who believe in Christ have the promise of eternal life in Him. In hours of relaxed diligence they perhaps let it slip; but under real pressure faith revives and grasps the promise again. They may be humbled and distressed,

and they will acknowledge that they have brought this on themselves; but they are persuaded that He is faithful who promised, and so will not cast them off. *D. F.*

I may be faint and weary, but my God cannot. I may fluctuate and alter as to my frames and feelings, but my Redeemer is unchangeably the same always. I might utterly fail and come to nothing, if left to myself. But I cannot be so left to myself. He will renew my strength, either by changing my weakness into strength or by enduing me with His own power. He is wise to foresee and provide for all my dangers. He is rich to relieve and succor me in all my wants. He is faithful to perfect and perform all His promises. He is blessed and immortal, to enrich my poor desponding soul with blessedness and immortality. *A. Serle.*

The grace which God gives is for the real occasions of life. To forget this is to make the whole of our moral and religious life morbid and unreal. When God sends us work, He sends us strength to do it; and when He sends us trouble, He sends us strength to bear it. For troubles which we imagine for ourselves, and for work we imagine for ourselves, we must go for strength to our imagination—not to Him. *R. W. Dale.*—There are only two salves for sorrow, *prayer* and *work*. Trust in God and keep doing are the best recipes for every human care. There are no wounds of the spirit which they will not heal. Strength, fortitude, patience, resignation, are as sure to be vouchsafed to the sufferers who earnestly pray for them, and at the same time are diligent in the performance of their temporal tasks, as the harvest is to follow the planting of the seed. *Anon.*

14. "Fear not, saith the Lord." We see there is no remedy for this fear but the voice and word of the Lord; only His encouragement can hold us up in the conflict, and no created power will bear us up in the strait; His voice and word give boldness and courage. Let us not, because of our unworthiness, refuse the promise. If it were for our deservings, it were not grace. Labor indeed to be sensible of thy weakness and unworthiness, that thou may the better take the promise. Seeing God knows thy weakness, unworthiness and every evil that troubles thee, and meets them with, "Fear not," take heart—strive on! *Dickson.*

The trouble which we bear rightly with God's help gives new hope. If we have made our sorrow an occasion for learning, by living experience, somewhat more of His exquisitely

varied and ever-ready power to aid and bless, then it will teach us firmer confidence in these inexhaustible resources, which we have thus once more proved. If in my sorrow I have been able to keep quiet because I have had hold of God's hand, and if in that unstruggling submission I have found that from His hand I have been upheld and had strength above my own infused into me, then my memory will give the threads with which Hope weaves her bright web. I build upon two things, God's unchangeableness and His help already received; and upon these foundations I may wisely and safely rear a palace of hope which shall never prove a castle in the air. The past, when it is God's past, is the surest pledge of the future. Because He has been with us in six troubles, therefore we may be sure that in seven He will not forsake us. The light of hope is the brightness, the face of God. A. M.

14. The word *goel* (*redeemer*) would suggest to a Hebrew reader the ideas of a near kinsman (Lev. 25 : 24, 25) and of deliverance from bondage by the payment of a ransom. Its highest application occurs here and in Job 19 : 25. The reference to the Son of God, although it might not be perceptible of old, is now rendered necessary by the knowledge that this act even under the old dispensation is always referred to the same person of the Trinity. A.

"The Holy One of Israel." This title occurs fourteen times in the earlier, fifteen times in these later prophecies, elsewhere only twice in Jeremiah, and also in Ps. 71 : 22 ; 78 : 41. It is here the seal, first of God's threatenings, and next of His glorious promises. The title is both emphatic, and inwrought into the texture of the prophecy (41 : 14, 16, 20 ; 43 : 3, 14 ; 45 : 11 ; 55 : 5 ; 60 : 14). *Birks*.

15. The image presented is the strange but strong one of a down-trodden worm reducing hills to powder, the essential idea being that of a weak and helpless object overcoming the most disproportionate obstacles by strength derived from another. In verse 16 this figure is carried out and completed. The mountains, having been completely threshed, are winnowed, in the usual Oriental mode, by being thrown to the wind. Israel, on the other hand, is safe, not through his own strength, but in that of his protector, *in whom—i.e., in his relation to whom he finds his highest happiness and honor.* A.

15. It matters not what strength they have or want to whom the promise is made, for the whole strength stands in the promise. And when God threatens, it matters not what

strength be in the party threatened ; for albeit they were as mountains, yet He who threatens can make a worm thresh them ; God's flail can ding them all in dust. Look never how weak or how strong those are to whom God speaks, for the weak shall be strong, and the strong shall become weak.

16. "And thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, shalt glory in the Holy One." Rejoice is for the time bygone and present, and glory is for the time to come ; which lets us see, that the fruit or right use-making of our delivery past, is to make us rejoice for the present, and glory for the time to come. And indeed, the godly, if they will not look to themselves, but to God, may rejoice for time bygone, and glory for time to come. *Dickson*.

17. There is nothing in the text or context to deprive the passage of its genuine and full sense as a general promise, tantamount to saying, When My people feel their need, I will be present to supply it. Such a promise those in exile could not fail to find appropriate in their case ; but it is equally appropriate in others, and especially to the glorious deliverance of the Church from the fetters of the old economy. A.

19, 20. He plants all the choicest trees in precisely the most unlikely situations, where you would least of all expect them. With trees, will return even to the ancient deserts rains, vegetable growths, fertility, verdure and beauty. God makes these extraordinary superhuman changes that all men may know that this is His almighty hand, working to new-create where need be, for the relief, comfort and joy of His trusting people.

21, 22. The conception of a public hearing as before a tribunal appears again. The Lord demands of His opponents that they do their best ; bring forward their strongest proofs ; and especially He calls on them now to show if they have prescience of the future—the power of prophecy.

23. The challenge, "Do good, or do evil," we must consider as addressed to idol gods. Let them really show that they do anything, good or evil, and they shall have all credit for it. The implication here—affirmed in the strongest form in verse 24—is that they are mere nothings, utterly powerless for any result, even the least possible, good or evil. H. C.

25. I have raised up one from the north, etc. Cyrus is represented here as coming from "the north," and from the "east ;" he was born of two different people, the Persians by his father, the Medes by his mother.

Persia lay to the east of Babylon ; Media northward, and Cyrus's army (of which the Medes made a considerable part) is described (Jer. 50 : 9, 41) as coming out of the north. For his profession of belief in the great " God of heaven and earth," see Ezra 1 : 2. *Prideaux.*

At a very early age Cyrus was removed to Media, lying on the north of Babylon ; and it was from Media that he came down at the head of victorious hosts upon the doomed capital. The prophet thus sees in a vision a prince of *eastern* birth, marching upon the city from the *north*, and that his name was Cyrus (45 : 3). *Phelps.*

26. The meaning of the whole verse is that the events in question had been foretold by Jehovah and no other. A.—The whole description is true not only in reference to these old idolaters, but to critics in modern times, who see only forgeries after the event in these Divine prophecies. *Birks.*

28. The verse is full of laconic and elliptical expressions, which however may be easily completed, as will appear from the following brief paraphrase. *I will look* (once more to see whether any of these idols or their prophet can predict the future), *but there is no one* (who attempts it). *From among* (all) *these* (I seek for a response, but there is none). Yet once more *I will ask them, and* (perhaps) *they will return an answer.* The same application of the verb to the prediction of the future occurs in chap. 44 : 26.

29. This is at once the termination of the sentence begun in the last clause of the verse preceding, and the summary conclusion of the whole preceding controversy as to the divinity of any gods except Jehovah. To the usual expressions of nonentity the prophet adds two other strong descriptive terms—viz., wind and emptiness. A.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XLII.

42 : 1 BEHOLD my servant, whom I uphold ; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth : I
 2 have put my spirit upon him ; he shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles. He shall not
 3 cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not
 break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench : he shall bring forth judgement in truth.
 4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgement in the earth ; and the isles
 5 shall wait for his law. Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched
 them forth ; he that spread abroad the earth and that which cometh out of it ; he that giveth
 6 breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein : I the LORD have called
 thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a cove-
 7 nant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles ; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the pris-
 8 oners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. I am the
 LORD ; that is my name : and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise unto
 9 graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare :
 before they spring forth I tell you of them.
 10 Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth ; ye that go
 11 down to the sea, and all that is therein, the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wil-
 derness and the cities thereof lift up *their voice*, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit ; let the
 12 inhabitants of Sela sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory
 13 unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands. The LORD shall go forth as a mighty
 man ; he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war : he shall cry, yea, he shall shout aloud ; he
 14 shall do mightily against his enemies. I have long time holden my peace ; I have been still,
 and refrained myself : *now* will I cry out like a travailing woman ; I will gasp and pant
 15 together. I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs ; and I will
 16 make the rivers islands, and will dry up the pools. And I will bring the blind by a way
 that they know not ; in paths that they know not will I lead them : I will make darkness
 light before them, and crooked places straight. These things will I do, and I will not for-

17 sake them. They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say unto molten images, Ye are our gods.
 18, 19 Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I send? who is blind as he that is at peace *with me*, and blind as 20 the LORD's servant? Thou seest many things, but thou observest not; his ears are open, but 21 he heareth not. It pleased the LORD, for his righteousness' sake, to magnify the law, and 22 make it honourable. But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a 23 spoil, and none saith, Restore. Who is there among you that will give ear to this? that will 24 hearken and hear for the time to come? Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the LORD? he against whom we have sinned, and in whose ways they would 25 not walk, neither were they obedient unto his law. Therefore he poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle; and it set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.

Chap. 42. The servant of the Lord is the central personage throughout this chapter. This phrase, "My servant," is first applied to the Messiah (verses 1-4); His mission and work are to enlighten the Gentiles (verses 5-7). The blessedness and joy of this stupendous change appear (verses 8-16); consequently idol worshippers shall be confounded (verse 17); and are exhorted to open their long blinded eyes to behold this Gospel light (verse 18). Now the people of the Lord appear also as His servant; they have strangely relapsed into moral blindness (verses 19, 20); for which the Lord gives them up to chastisement and spoiling to reclaim them from their sins and to retrieve His own honor (verses 21-25).

1. My servant. It is vital to the just exposition of this chapter to fix the exact sense of the phrase, "My servant." With only these verses (1-4) before us, it might appear quite obvious that they refer simply and only to Jesus, the Messiah. That these verses refer to Him primarily and legitimately there can be no doubt. The citation of this entire passage by Matthew (12: 18-21) as a prophecy fulfilled in Christ is itself ample authority, the more conclusive because the special point for which they are cited—viz., the quiet, modest bearing of Jesus in reference to His miracles as contrasted with the noisy, obtrusive, ostentatious pretensions of impostors generally, corresponds precisely with the strain of this prophecy. Then, moreover, the first verse, "Mine elect in whom My soul delighteth," "I have put My Spirit upon Him," is manifestly referred to in the scenes of the Saviour's baptism, when the Holy Spirit fell visibly upon Him, and a voice from heaven announced, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3: 17). The same words were spoken again and distinctly heard at His transfiguration (Matt. 17: 5).

The reference of this phrase ("My servant") to the Messiah might be confirmed yet further by comparison with other Messianic prophecies where He bears this name—e.g., chaps. 43: 10; 49: 3, 6; 52: 13 and 53: 11. All then would be very plain, and this view would seem to require no modification were it not for the demands of the context, both the preceding (41: 8, 9) and the succeeding (42: 19, 20). In both these passages it is manifest that Israel as the Lord's professed and chosen people is also called "the servant of the Lord;" "My servant." Hence the phrases, "My servant" and the "servant of the Lord," must be used in a broadly comprehensive sense to include all those by whom the Lord works in promoting His kingdom in this revolted world; Jesus Christ, the head, and His people, the members, all together comprising one complex body. This view is not unfrequently presented in the New Testament. "As My Father hath sent Me, so send I you;" all alike sent forth on the same mission, to do various parts of the same great work. It should also be noticed that this view is entirely in harmony with the scope of the previous chapter (41), the central idea of which is, God and His people *versus* sin and its earthly champions; a grand antagonism in which the Almighty God is one party, working, however, with and through His Son and His redeemed people; and the nations of idolaters, with all their idol gods, are the other. Entirely in harmony with this strain of chap. 41, our present chapter expands more in detail the agents through whom the Lord works in this world the manner and spirit of their work and the results. In such a detailed account, the Messiah must of necessity be prominent. Hence the chapter speaks first of Him. In the closing paragraph (verses 19-25) His people are altogether in the foreground, this passage be-

ing entirely inapplicable to the Messiah, but painfully true of His people, especially in the age before His personal advent. This view of the scope of the chapter and in particular of the phrase, "My servant," seems to meet exactly all the conditions of the case. Hence there is no occasion to discuss or refute the theory that this "servant" is Isaiah, or the prophets taken collectively. H. C.

Briefly, the underlying idea of the Old Testament, in its subjective aspect, is that of "the servant of the Lord." The history of the Old Testament in its progress to the New is that of the widening of the idea of the servant of the Lord into that of the kingdom of God. Lastly, its realization and completion is in the Christ and the Church of God. Unless, indeed, the Old Testament had this higher meaning and unity, it could not possess any permanent or universal interest, except from a historical point of view. It would not permanently concern mankind—no, nor even Israel, at least, in its present relation to the world. On the other hand, without it the New Testament would want its historical basis, and the historical Christ offer what would seem an absolutely unintelligible problem. A. E.

1. My chosen one, or the one whom I have selected to accomplish My great purposes. It implies that God had designated or appointed Him for the purpose. In Matt. 12:18 it is rendered "My beloved." It implies that God had chosen or appointed Him to perform the work of a Messiah. *In whom My soul delighteth.* This language is applied to the Lord Jesus in Matt. 3:17 and in Matt. 12:18. God regarded Him as qualified for His work; He approved of what He did; He was well pleased with all His words, and thoughts, and plans. *I have put My Spirit upon Him.* (Cf. John 3:34.) "For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." The Lord Jesus was Divine, yet as mediator He is everywhere represented as "the anointed" of God, or as endowed with the influences of the Holy Spirit. See Isa. 61:1, where the Messiah says of Himself, "the Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me," etc. (Cf. Luke 4:18.) Before He entered upon His work the Spirit of God descended on Him at His baptism (Matt. 3:17), and in all His work He showed that He was endowed abundantly with that Spirit, and was like God. *Barnes.*

Christ was chosen to the office of God's servant and our Saviour; chosen in the eternal counsel, before time, to assume human nature in the fulness of time. "In whom My soul de-

lighteth." Doth God's soul delight in the person and work of His beloved Son? So doth ours. Is God's soul delighted that Christ hath satisfied His justice, magnified and made honorable His law, and finished salvation for miserable sinners? So is ours. Then as surely as our souls delight in Christ, the Lord's soul delights in us (62:4). *W. Mason.*

By "Spirit," as in all such cases, we are to understand not only Divine influence, but the Divine person who exerts it. The use of the phrase *on Him*, where *in Him* might have seemed more natural, is probably intended to suggest the idea of descent, or of an influence from heaven. A.

"Judgment," a prominent word in this passage (verses 1, 3, 4), has no better equivalent than true religion, in the sense of what is essentially right in heart and life, both toward God and toward man. It is the spirit of loving and serving God according to truth, made practical also in one's whole heart and life toward mankind. To be *righteous* in the broad sense of right purpose and right doing is the radical idea. Such true religion the Messiah will bring forth, and diffuse widely throughout the Gentile world. H. C.

2, 3. The mode in which the Messiah and His people were to *bring forth judgment to the nations*, or in other words, to spread the true religion. It was not to be by clamor or by violence. That such is the true import of the words is clear from the addition of the last clause, which would be unmeaning if the verse related merely to a compassionate and sympathetic temper. It was meant to be descriptive not of our Saviour's human virtues, but of the nature of His kingdom and of the means by which it was to be established. In their original connection and in Matthew's application of them they describe that kingdom which was not of this world; which came not with observation (Luke 17:20); which was neither meat nor drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. 14:17); which was founded and promoted not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord. A.

He shall insure the eventual triumph of *judgment* or righteousness. And this ascendancy of goodness in the earth, He shall effect by no violent nor forceful measures. He shall not cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. But full of tenderness, the bruised reed shall He not break; full of patience and holy purpose, the smoking flax shall He not quench; and by this mild and gentle management He shall win for the true religion a world-

wide victory. The same principle pervades the Lord's dealing with each individual soul. *Hamilton.*

In His very walks of love, as He went about doing good, while the largesses of His charity flowed to thousands, He fled from the thanks and praises of His beneficiaries, and stole away, again and again, from the captivated populace, to cast Himself before His Father, in the cold recesses of the mountain or the strand. His voice was ascending to heaven in solitary intercession; it was not heard in the streets. J. W. A.—It is true that He denounced the scribes and Pharisees; and against them His voice *was* heard. But then they were hypocrites, and He came to teach truth as well as mercy. His gentleness was never intended as a renunciation of wisdom or of righteousness; and to disabuse the minds of the people concerning their false guides was clearly part of His office. In relation to others, however, how lowly was His whole deportment; how easy of access; how tender in invitation; how mild in rebuke. How gentle in all His dealings with His apostles; bearing with their mistakes, forgiving their infirmities, and loving them, in spite of repeated provocations, even unto the end. How pitiful toward His enemies, and forgiving even to His murderers. *J. Angus.*

The promises are not made to strong faith, but to true. The promise doth not say, He who hath a giant faith, who can believe God's love through a frown, who can rejoice in affliction, who can work wonders, remove mountains, stop the mouth of lions, shall be saved; but, *Whosoever believes*, be his faith never so small. A reed is but weak especially when it is bruised; yet the promise is made to it—"A bruised reed will He not break." *Watson.*—We never have more than we can bear. The present hour we are always able to endure. As our day, so is our strength. If the trials of many years were gathered into one, they would overwhelm us; therefore, in pity to our little strength, He sends first one, then another, then removes both, and lays a third, heavier, perhaps, than either; but all is so wisely measured to our strength that the bruised reed is never broken. *H. E. Manning.*

The prophet employs another and a kindred metaphor, drawn from the common lamps of the Hebrews, in which the wick was of nothing better than flax. The office of the lamp is to blaze and give light; but when instead of this it barely smokes we hasten to extinguish it. Not so the benign Redeemer; He does not extinguish even that which flickers in the

socket and is ready to die out. The smoking flax He shall not quench. It is part of His Messiahship to spare the perishing and rejected, the outcast reed, the half-quenched lamp. Blessed be His name! His princely advent is accompanied with a proclamation fitted to "revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isa. 57:15). *J. W. A.*

His coming was full of mercy and peace, of healing and salvation; noiseless as the light, gentle as the dew; but, like the light, giving life and joy; like the dew, giving beauty, fragrance and refreshment. The heart that is bruised and crushed with its sorrows and sins He will not break with the severity of judgment, but soothe and heal with His pardoning grace. The dim torch of faith and love, though like the just-expiring wick of flax it emits hardly a spark of light. He will not extinguish, but with the oil of His mercy will kindle it to a pure, bright flame. Eyes that have been blinded to truth He will open to the sunlight; souls that have been shut up in the darkness of guilt or of despair He will bring out into the free air of hope and peace. For every sin He has mercy; for every sorrow, healing; while yet His law of truth and holiness shall judge the earth. This holy, just, gracious, merciful Prince of Israel is our Saviour and Lord. *J. P. T.*

Never deviating from the way of God, as mighty in deed, as silent, self-denying and piously trustful in suffering, He was also as mild and full of love as the gentlest woman, when He would aid, console, feelingly sympathize. He went about and did good, helped the poor in body and in spirit. Nothing that concerned humanity was foreign from Him; every man stood near to Him as a brother. His characteristic action was to raise up again the bruised reed, to enkindle anew the glimmering wick. He wept over the city that rejected Him, and prayed on His cross for those who had nailed Him to it. His whole life was a sacrifice. *Ullmann.*

He the All-pure had tenderness for what was not pure. He who stood in Divine uprightness that never faltered felt compassion for the ruined and infinite gentleness for human fall. Broken, disappointed, doubting hearts, in dismay and bewilderment, never looked in vain to Him. Amid the wreck of human nature He was striving to lift it out of its degradation. He was searching out in revolting places that which had fallen down, that He might build it up again in fair proportions a holy Temple to

the Lord. Therefore He labored among the guilty ; therefore He was the companion of outcasts ; therefore He spoke tenderly and lovingly to those whom society counted undone ; therefore He loved to bind up the bruised and the broken-hearted ; therefore His breath fanned the spark which seemed dying out in the wick of the expiring taper, when men thought that it was too late, and that the hour of *hopeless* profligacy was come. It was that feature in His character, that tender, hoping, encouraging spirit of His which the prophet Isaiah fixed upon as characteristic. "A bruised reed will He not break." F. W. R.

And *they* follow Him who are sought by honor and repute rather than seek them, who delight to live in quiet communion with God, who are lost in their work when they enter upon it without wasting thought on themselves or the impression they make, who are not quick to attract attention, and need some discerning person to seek them out and discover them. Such persons are like Jesus—most like Him if their character rests on the rock of godliness, and more capable than others of becoming like Him, if it has only a natural foundation. T. D. W.

4. This righteous King "shall not fail nor be discouraged." He is to be reckoned on to the uttermost, or, as the New Testament puts it, He is "the faithful and true witness." This is the strong Son of God, who gathered all His powers together to run with patience the race set before Him, and to whom all may turn with the confidence that He is faithful "as a son over his own house," and will inviolably keep the promise of His word and of His past acts. A. M.

No matter what may be here, the sun shines on, calmly, perpetually, radiating its light ; and so Christ, the great Sun of Righteousness, sits on His throne, and there come from Him the beams of light that are shining upon humanity, penetrating the heart. On and on and ever from Him is this eternal efflux of radiant glory. . . . Now that all power is given Him, now that all thrones are subject to Him, now that He sits on the circle of the heavens, He cannot fail, He cannot be discouraged, and He sees how all things are moving to bring about that mighty triumph of His kingdom. And if He is not discouraged, should we be? Our Saviour is to conquer this world—to subdue the world unto Himself—and it is ours simply to go forward, to take His word, perform His will, to put forth the agencies, to speak, to live, to labor, to love for Christ, and love shall

subdue all things. Oh, there is a glorious day ; it is a little in advance ! I know not how, but He will set judgment in the earth ; the isles shall wait for His law. *Simpson.*

They wait for it in the sense that they perish without it, that this only can give them life, and that in God's purpose this shall. The "isles" here are equivalent to the nations as in chaps. 40 : 15 and 41 : 1, 5, and must correspond to the Gentiles of verses 1, 6 in this context. Hence the passage must be accepted as a distinct, decisive prophecy that the nations are to be blessed by this life-giving Gospel. The great truths respecting God and salvation as taught by the Messiah are yet to go forth to them all.

5. The Divine name used here, *El*, meaning a Mighty One, and with the article, *the* mighty God, is specially appropriate in a passage which speaks of God in His relations as the Creator of all and the God of universal providence. The verbs are all in the *present tense*. Hence they affirm more than the general fact that God did once create, stretch out, spread forth, and give existence to vegetables and animals. They affirm that He is doing so still and continually. The strongest affirmation of a present activity which is possible in the Hebrew tenses is used throughout the verse, as well of creating and causing the productions of the earth to be as of giving breath and life to its people.

6. This mighty God has commissioned the Messiah, the pre-eminent "servant of the Lord," for the work here indicated, and will sustain Him and energize His work by an agency no less constant than that which fills the realm of nature. "Called Thee in *righteousness*" means in faithfulness to My word, especially of promise. H. C.

Give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.

God expressly declares that the Messiah should mediate a covenant between God and the people, and that the fruit of this covenant should extend to the Gentiles, who should enjoy the same privileges with the Jews, and be incorporated with them (chap. 49 : 8, 9 ; 55 : 3, 4 ; 61 : 8, 9). The extension of the Messiah's kingdom over the whole earth is mentioned by Isaiah so often and so emphatically that it seems to be the main drift of all his writings. *Allix.*

All that was in former ages promised and prefigured for the reconciliation of man to God is fulfilled and embodied in Jesus Christ. Jehovah has given Him "for a covenant of the people (Israel), for a light of the Gentiles." In Him all families of the earth are blessed. And

He is not remote from us as Abraham or David, with whom the Jews at all events are connected by long pedigrees. Christ is so closely united with all believers, that every fulfilment of the everlasting covenant to Him is also a fulfilment to them; every promise made to Him tends to their benefit, and every boon bestowed on them ought to issue in glory to Him. All the promises of God are to them "Yea and amen in Jesus Christ," having their security and stability in Him as the accepted and beloved of God. Promises there are, exceeding great and precious, covering all wants, suiting all seasons, stretching over all eternity. Mercies there are, everlasting, ever sure, because bestowed in the covenant, and guaranteed by the faithfulness and omnipotence of God, and by the presence of the Mediator of the covenant in heaven itself to make intercession for us. Chastisements, too, are in the covenant; stripes for undutiful children, or blows of the hand or of the rod—never, thank God! any smiting with the sword. It is chastening, not condemnation. The covenant itself cannot be broken, nor can the Lord's faithfulness fail. D. F.

Yes; Christ is a light to lighten the Gentiles—and the glory of the upper heavens shall yet scatter and chase away the darkness which still broods sullenly over the earth; and the new, Divine life, long repressed, shall yet reveal itself in fair and wonderful and lavish fertility; the very deserts of the world shall be covered with a moral wealth and beauty of which the brightest spring-time and the richest autumn are poor and pale symbols, and of which the loveliness of Paradise was only a dim and imperfect promise. The songs which filled the night with joy when Christ was born shall be heard again, with sweeter music, deeper harmonies and more exulting raptures; all heaven shall come down to earth—thrones and dominions, seraphim and cherubim, and shining armies of angels—to celebrate with sounding trumpets and golden harps and loud acclamations and tumultuous strains of triumph the final victory of Divine love over human sin, and the restoration of our race to God. We are not "mad" in exulting in these happy and confident expectations. God's mercy is mightier than all the powers of the world, the flesh and the devil. We—fanatics as men may deem us—"speak the words of truth and soberness." R. W. Dale.

7. The "opening of blind eyes" is correlated to giving them light (verse 6), the kind of light in both cases being the same, that of Gospel truth to the mind. The Gospel goes forth to

give sight to the spiritually blind, to release spiritual prisoners, and bring forth to the light of a new day the souls long shut up in confinement and darkness. The attempt to apply this to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon is unworthy of learned critics. H. C.

This is the craft and subtlety of the evil one, that he makes us fancy we are free, when we are in prison; he makes us fancy we are at liberty, when we are in bondage; he makes us fancy we are our own masters, when we are his slaves; he blinds and cheats and stupefies us, until we deem we are doing our own will and pursuing our own pleasure, when in fact we are drudging in his toils and rushing into the jaws of destruction before his lashing scourge. Therefore, in order that our eyes might be open to our misery and our danger before it was too late, God was mercifully pleased to give us His Scriptures, wherein He declares that, however its appearance may deceive us, sin is not a palace, but a prison, that in that prison we are all shut up, and that no earthly power can deliver us from it. *Vinet*.—We are captives in a foreign land; Christ was not only to pay our ransom for us, but to take us home when He had ransomed us. We are prisoners sitting in darkness in the prison-house; He is not only to come and throw open our prison-doors, bring us into the cheerful light and set us free; He is to take us by the hand when we are free, and to guide us by the right way to a city prepared for us. So then He who redeemed us keeps us; He who died for us lives for us; He who rescues us from the misery of our fall never leaves us till our whole salvation is completed; never lets one of us go till with His own right hand He has placed us out of the reach of all misery and all danger, in His own safe world of light and joy. C. Bradley.

8. From the assertion of Jehovah's power and perfection as a ground for His people's confidence, the prophet now proceeds, by a natural transition, to exhibit it in contrast with the impotence of those gods in whom the Gentiles trusted. The general doctrine of the verse is that true and false religion cannot coexist; because, however tolerant idolatry may be, it is essential to the worship of Jehovah to be perfectly exclusive of all other gods. This is included in the very name *Jehovah*, and accounts for its solemn proclamation here.

9. This is an appeal to former prophecies already verified, as grounds of confidence in those yet unfulfilled. The strong and beautiful expression in the last clause can only mean that the events about to be predicted were be-

yond the reach of human foresight, and is therefore destructive of the modern notion that these prophecies were written after Cyrus had appeared, and at a time when the further events of his history could be foreseen by an observer of unusual sagacity. A.

10-13. The thing really predicted here is the triumph of truth, the diffusion of the Gospel, and the substantial victory of King Messiah over sin and Satan throughout all the earth. This passage should of course be taken in connection with verses 1-4, 6, 7 above, which declare with less of poetry yet perhaps with more precision in the form of statement, that the Messiah shall push onward the victories of truth and righteousness until true religion shall pervade the earth and bless all the nations.

16. The figures here follow the lead of those in verses 6, 7—the Messiah “a light to the Gentiles,” opening blind eyes. Truth is to the mind what light is to the body. The Gentiles, long blind to the true God and to the way of salvation, are to be led in ways never known to them before—the way of holiness and heaven. H. C.

There cannot be a human being among us that is not moved by these assurances, because there is no one among us all that has not found out by rough experience that there are crooked things in his life which *need* to be made straight, and dark places which need to be made light; that there are spots where the ways part, with no guide-post, leaving the judgment and conscience perplexed, and where one is almost certain there must be paths better than that one he is walking in, safer if not smoother, and running to a better end. F. D. H.—There is mystery everywhere in our way to heaven; mystery within us, mystery around us, many mysteries behind us not yet cleared up, and still many before us to be entered and passed through. It would be easy to show that much of this is unavoidable, arising from the character of real religion and our own character; and it would be as easy to show that it all tends to the Divine glory and our good. The Lord brings us acquainted by it with His own glorious perfections, exercises by it the graces He has given us, humbles us, strengthens our faith, teaches us to confide, repose and delight in Him. He works in us by it a meetness for heaven while leading us to it, making the very road which conducts us to His presence fit us for its joys. C. Bradley.

It is the very law of God's dispensations, that when His people are going they know not whither, they are in the very path which the Master has appointed. “I will lead them in

paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.” The knowledge of this should work in us both submission and hope—submission, because God is sovereign, because He is wise, because He is just, because He is omnipotent, and because all resistance and all repining are fruitless and wicked; hope, because we are assured that all things work together for good to them that love God, being disposed according to a most gracious plan for accomplishing their perfection. J. W. A.—This guiding love of the heavenly Father is entirely independent of anything that we think, or do, or feel. It leads us in paths that we had not known. The love is undeserved and condescending. It comes out to us before we go after it. It deals with us as a mother handles a child just beginning to know only her face or her voice. F. D. H.

19. Why should He call the heathen blind and deaf, when Israel himself, with all his honors and advantages, refused to see or hear? The very people whose mission and vocation it was to make the Gentiles see and hear seemed to emulate their insensibility. The terms must be referred exclusively to Israel, the messenger whom God had sent to open the eyes of the other nations, but who had himself become wilfully blind. A.—“Who is blind as my servant?” The heathens who are blind from their birth, and have only some glimmering apprehensions that eternity succeeds time, are less culpable than those who have infinitely more reason to believe it, and yet believe it less. The plea for them will be a terrible accusation against such unbelievers. If a blind person falls, it moves compassion; but if one voluntarily shuts his eyes against the sun, and refuses the direction of the light, and falls from a precipice, his ruin is the just consequence of his folly. Simple ignorance excuses as to the degrees of the fault, but affected wilful ignorance, now reason and revelation with united beams give so clear a prospect into the eternal world, aggravates the guilt and sentence of such unbelievers. Bates.

20. The thought here is that the Lord's people had utterly failed to improve their opportunities for Divine knowledge. They had seen many things of God, but would not observe—*i.e.*, would not keep them in view; would not hold them before the mind for close and impressive attention.

21. This verse declares that God is *propitious*, *favorably inclined*, for the sake of His own

righteous cause—*i.e.*, that He will not abandon them to moral ruin and His kingdom with them, but will persist in remedial efforts ; will reclaim His people and will magnify and bring forth in honor the truth and the moral power of His kingdom. H. C.

22-25. While applicable to the sufferings of the Jews in Babylon, it is in itself a general declaration of a fact, often verified and especially exemplified in ancient Israel, that the sufferings of God's people are the consequence of sin. A.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XLIII.

- 43 : 1** BUT now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel : Fear not, for I have redeemed thee ; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.
- 2** When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ;
- 3** neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of
- 4** Israel, thy saviour ; I have given Egypt as thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou hast been precious in my sight, *and* honourable, and I have loved thee ; therefore will I
- 5** give men for thee, and peoples for thy life. Fear not ; for I am with thee : I will bring thy
- 6** seed from the east, and gather thee from the west ; I will say to the north, Give up ; and to the south, Keep not back ; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the end of the
- 7** earth ; every one that is called by my name, and whom I have created for my glory ; I have
- 8** formed him ; yea, I have made him. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the
- 9** deaf that have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the peoples be assembled : who among them can declare this, and shew us former things ? let them bring their
- 10** witnesses, that they may be justified : or let them hear, and say, It is truth. Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen : that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he ; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be
- 11, 12** after me. I, even I, am the LORD ; and beside me there is no saviour. I have declared, and I have saved, and I have shewed, and there was no strange *god* among you : therefore ye
- 13** are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and I am God. Yea, since the day was I am he ; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand : I will work, and who shall let it ?
- 14** Thus saith the LORD, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel : For your sake I have sent to
- 15, 16** Babylon, and I will bring down all of them as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships of
- 17** saith the LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters ; which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power ; they lie down together, they
- 18** shall not rise ; they are extinct, they are quenched as flax : Remember ye not the former
- 19** things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing ; now shall it
- 20** spring forth ; shall ye not know it ? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beasts of the field shall honour me, the jackals and the ostriches : because I
- 21, 22** give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my
- 23** chosen : the people which I formed for myself, that they might set forth my praise. Yet
- 24** thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob ; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings ; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not made thee to serve with offerings, nor wearied thee with
- 25** frankincense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices : but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine
- 26** own sake ; and I will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance ; let us plead together : set thou forth *thy cause*, that thou mayest be justified. Thy first father sinned, and
- 27** thine interpreters have transgressed against me. Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary, and I will make Jacob a curse, and Israel a reviling.

Chap. 43. This chapter bears general relations to its larger context (chaps. 40-45), but more special relations to its nearer context—viz., chap. 42 : 19-25. In this latter passage, Israel stands as the servant of God, chosen, yet often unfaithful to her trust; instructed, but yet dark-minded and at best improving very imperfectly her opportunities for Divine knowledge. Hence she was chastened, but never utterly abandoned.

1. God would not have Israel fear the final issue of those afflictions which will befall her. He created and formed her, which means that He has chosen the posterity of Abraham and has made the nation of Israel all that she is in the line of moral worth and of peculiar honor as His chosen people. Therefore she ought to trust her Lord to determine all her future.

2. A blessed truth underlies these figures—viz., that no peril or pain can be so extreme that God's presence shall not be with His trustful people there, and make the martyr's stake a paradise. The antecedent context favors the supposition that the afflictions contemplated here are chastisements from God to humble and reclaim His wandering people. In this view the verse is a promise that however apparently perilous, they shall be really harmless, and even fruitful of blessings. H. C.

The sum is this, That no calamity of this world, no troubles of this life, no terrors of death, no guiltiness of sin, can be so great, but that a "*godly*" man by means of his faith and felicity in Christ shall wade out of them well enough. For howsoever other things go, still he shall have a solace in his soul, a comfort in his conscience, a heaven in his heart, knowing himself reconciled to God and justified by faith. *T. Playfere.*—Divine grace, even in the heart of weak and sinful man, is an invincible thing. Drown it in the waters of adversity, it rises more beautiful, as not being drowned indeed, but only washed; throw it into the furnace of fiery trials, it comes out purer, and loses nothing but the dross which our corrupt nature mixes with it. *Leighton.*—Though it be through darkness, though it be in deep waters, you know whom you have believed. Infinite love, joined to infinite skill, shall pilot the way through every strait, and temptation, and peril. God has ever loved to place His people where they had none to hope in but Him only. J. W. A.

God has never promised dying grace when one's duty is to *live*. He gives *living* grace then; grace for temptation, grace for struggle,

grace for toil, for service, for all duty. For every hour there is some allotment of obedience or submission, and for each hour strength will be given. "As thy days so shall thy strength be." Then when the hour of death comes, God will give dying grace, and the believing soul will pass into the strange mystery, sustained by the Divine arm and supported by the Divine Presence. The promise is, "When thou passest *through the waters* I will be with thee;" it is not, "When thou art approaching, yet far away;" nor even "When thou drawest near;" but, "When thou *passest through*." The storehouse in which God has laid up dying grace is found only in the valley itself, and you cannot get it until you enter the shadows. Grace for duty, for toil, for love, for honesty, for earnest service in every good cause, for heroic struggle, for unselfish ministry, for holy influence—grace for noble and beautiful living and for loyal devotion to Christ while the heart's pulses are full and while God wants us still in this world; but not yet grace for dying, since death is far away; then grace for dying when the life's work is done, its duty finished, and the call comes to leave this world and depart home. J. R. Miller.

3. The description of the speaker in the first clause is intended to conciliate regard to what he says in the other. It was in the character not only of an absolute and sovereign God, but in that of Israel's God, his Holy One, his Saviour, that Jehovah had thus chosen him to the exclusion of all other nations.

5-7. The repetition of the same thought—"created," "formed," "made"—lays special stress on the agency of God through His word and spirit in the regeneration of sinful men, Jews or Gentiles, to render them fit members of His church and fit servants of His earthly kingdom. This great and precious promise is pertinently adduced as a reason why His people need not *fear*. "For I am with thee, saith the Lord," to ensure to thee success in what thou shouldest regard as thy life-work—the conversion of men from darkness to light.

8, 9. The grand conception in these verses (as in chap. 41 : 1, 5, 21) is that of a convocation of the heathen world before an ideal tribunal to test the rival claims of Jehovah, *versus* idol gods—the decision to turn mainly on the point of *prescience*, as evinced in prophecy. Who has predicted events far in the future, and they have come to pass? Have any of the heathen gods done this? If any, who is he, and what has he predicted? Let them come forward, produce their witnesses, and prove their claim

valid ["justify themselves"] or let them hear my witnesses, and say it is truth.

10. Who His witnesses are to be. They are "ye," His professed people, in the broad sense which appears in verses 5-7—those vast multitudes gathered from every land into the one society of the redeemed, all these and with them "my servant," the Messiah, who comes to earth to bear witness to the truth—*i.e.*, to reveal God to men. The object sought in all this witnessing is that ye may know and believe Me and understand that I am He, the one ever-living God. Similar is the testimony from the Saviour's own lips. "This is life eternal that they might know Thee the only true God." "I have declared unto them Thy name." H. C.

Every believer, however humble his position, however few or feeble his qualifications, however multiplied his occupations or cares, every believer has *his own* testimony to bear. None but he can bear it. In the part assigned him there is no proxyship of word or act. As a called soldier of Christ, he can neither procure nor offer a substitute. Neither voluntary Christian associations, an appointed ministry, nor the church in its organized capacity can do his work. The ministers of God have indeed their own peculiar responsibilities and for these, as individuals, they have to give account. But societies, churches, are only combinations of individual believers, each of whom is God's appointed witness, in his place and to the extent of his ability and opportunity. B.

Life, entire life, is a period of witnessing. By act, by omission, by speech, by silence, whether you will or not, you are forever testifying. Hour by hour you are testifying, sometimes much more loudly than by words, either for or against your Master. To be firm for Christ, when all the tide of opinion, business, pleasure, runs the other way, you need a courage which will never come to you except upon your knees. If you only have His spirit, if His life flows into you, if, believing on and clinging to Him, you have inward pulses which keep time with His heart, you will stand in the evil day, you will win souls, you will recommend the Gospel, you will live teaching and die witnessing. J. W. A.

What we want, above all things, in this age is heartiness and holy simplicity—men who justify the holy impulse of grace in their hearts, and do not keep it back by artificial clogs of prudence and false fear, or the pretences of fastidiousness and artificial delicacy. These are they whom God will make His witnesses in

all ages. They dare to be holy, dare just as readily to be singular. What God puts in them that they accept, and when He puts a song, they sing it. They know Christ inwardly, and therefore stand for Him outwardly. They endure hardness. They fight a fight. And these are the souls who shall stand before God accepted. *Bushnell.*

If the eleven had stopped with being disciples, then we should have said that Christianity meant nothing then and means nothing to-day but discipleship. But if they went on from being absorbent disciples and became at last radiant apostles, with their mouths full of persuasion and their lives all running over with the demonstration of the Gospel, then we shall be obliged to say that then and now Christianity means apostleship just as much as it means discipleship. It means purpose just as much as it means power; it means making others Christians just as much as it means being Christians ourselves; it means making Christ a real thing in the minds and hearts of others just as much as it means having Christ made a real thing to us; it means to-day as much as it meant 1850 years ago, bearing witness to the Son of God in the narrower circle of the home, the broader circle of the community, and forth even to the uttermost part of the earth. These things when carefully and prayerfully considered will create within us a deep sense of our own individual and personal responsibility. It is a part of Christianity to be apostolic. The anointing of the Holy Ghost sets each one of us—man, woman and child—in the line of the true apostolic succession; and as after the ascension of Christ mankind lay in the hands of the original apostles for them to convert, so to-day the conversion of the world pertains to us as their spiritual representatives and successors. C. H. P.

12. In view of what God had shown and had done among them and for them, they were competent witnesses to His true divinity. They had seen abundant evidence that Jehovah is indeed the true God. H. C.

13. The best interpreters explain it as meaning since the first day, or since time began. The words are then universal, both in the extent of power claimed and in relation to the time of its execution. Over every object and in every age the power of Jehovah had been clearly proved to be supreme and absolute. A.

14, 15. These two verses appeal to the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon as the two next in order (verses 16, 17) appeal to the exo-

dus from Egypt, in proof that Jehovah is truly the mighty God of His people Israel, their Creator, Redeemer, and King. The deliverance from Babylon was indeed in the distant future relatively to the actual life of Isaiah, while that from Egypt was past; yet the former is presented here as seen by the prophet already past or passing. H. C.

14. Note the two qualifications necessary for our spiritual Goel, or Redeemer. 1. He must be rich enough to purchase back the inheritance, strong enough to destroy the murderer and high enough in rank to take the place of the former husband. *Christ, then, must be God.* Man is bankrupt and cannot buy the lost estate. Man is murdered, and cannot, therefore, be his own avenger. And God was the first husband—who but God can take God's place? 2. He must be a kinsman, full of sympathy for the impoverished, the smitten, the lost, for the Goel was no stranger. Indeed the word, originally signifying "a redeemer," became synonymous with kinsman. (See Ruth 4:1, 3.) *Christ, then, must be man.* He "was made flesh and dwelt among us," and is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Such must have been the Jewish Christian's view of Jesus as the Redeemer, combining in Himself the Divine and the human. The very name, seen through the glass of Jewish law and Jewish usage, showed the Son of God to be the Son of man. *Crosby.*

16, 17. The whole description is graphic and terse, full of fire and withal of most impressive truth for the comfort of God's people in every age.

18. But think not longer of former things, for there are things yet to come vastly greater, eclipsing the old and throwing them entirely into the shade. H. C.

19. It is best to take this and the 16th verses as strong metaphorical descriptions of deliverance from suffering and danger by a direct Divine interposition. Thus understood, the prophet's language means that God could change the face of nature and control the angry elements in favor of His people; that He had so done in time past, and would again do so in time to come. A.

20, 21. The language and figures are possibly borrowed from the restoration from Babylon, or more probably brought before the mind in verse 14, from the journeyings through the desert of Sinai; or perhaps from both. But manifestly, these are figures, and refer to spiritual blessings to be shed forth in the gathering of the Gentiles home to God. When these great

blessings shall come upon God's people, they will indeed show forth His praise, both actively, out of their full hearts, and passively as illustrating in their own wonderful conversion the large and victorious grace of God. H. C.

21. Another declaration of the end for which Israel existed as a nation. This brings us back to the main proposition of the chapter,—viz., that Jehovah had not only made them what they were, but had made them for the purpose of promoting His own glory, so that any claim of merit upon their part, and any apprehension of entire destruction, must be equally unfounded. A.

23, 24. The Israelites are here condemned for their failure in the duties of holy worship. Their sin was partly of omission, partly that of idol offerings and worship in high places, instead of God's own temple; partly weariness and reluctance, and partly also their self-righteous pride. Even the law of sacrifices, when seen and used aright, was "holy and just and good." It was a wise discipline for their infant faith, and its neglect or perversion formed one main part of their national guilt. Their sin is here exposed in its deep ingratitude, that the pardoning grace of God, by contrast, might be more clearly and fully revealed. *Birks.*—This strain of complaint and rebuke would have been out of place during the exile, for sacrifices were then out of the question. Hence the writer was not living there. H. C.

25. "I, even I, am He who" yet "blotteth out thy transgressions." This gracious declaration of God's readiness to pardon sin comes in very strangely: the charge ran very high, "Thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities" (verse 24). Now one would think it should follow, "I, even I, am He" that will destroy thee, and burden Myself no longer with care about thee." No, "I, even I, am He that will forgive thee;" as if the great God would teach us that forgiving injuries is the best way to make ourselves easy and to keep ourselves from being wearied with them. This comes in here to encourage them to repent, because there is forgiveness with God, and to show the freeness of Divine mercy; where sin has been exceeding sinful, grace appears exceeding gracious. Observe here (1) How the pardon is expressed; He will "blot them out" as a cloud is blotted out by the beams of the sun (44:22), as a debt is blotted out, not to appear against the debtor; the book is crossed as if the debt were paid, because it is pardoned, upon the payment which the surety has made; or as a sentence is blotted out when it is re-

versed ; as the curse was blotted out with the waters of jealousy, which made it of no effect to the innocent (Num. 5 : 23). He will not remember the sin ; which intimates not only that He will remit the punishment of what is past, but that it shall be no diminution to His love for the future. When God forgives, He forgets. (2) What is the ground and reason of the pardon. It is not for the sake of anything in us, but for His own sake ; for His mercies' sake, His promise' sake, and especially for His Son's sake, and that He may Himself be glorified in it. (3) How God glories in it—"I, even I, am He ;" He glories in it as His prerogative ; none can forgive sin but God only, and He will do it, it is His settled resolution ; He will do it willingly and with delight ; it is His pleasure, it is His honor ; so He is pleased to reckon it. H.

What, my soul, the very God whom thou hast "made to serve with thy sins and wearied with thine iniquities," will He blot them all out ? Yes, as a black cloud is dispelled by the sun or driven away by the wind ; or as an immense debt is discharged by the stroke of the pen of a merciful creditor, never, never more to appear against or be demanded of the debtor. For, O wonder of love ! He saith farther, *And will not remember thy sins.* I cannot forget my sins ; how then can my Lord ! He laid them upon His Son, thy surety. They were all atoned for by Him. Why all this ? For the

sake of thy works, or anything thou hast done ? Spurn the thought. Hear thy Lord, *For mine own sake*, I have blotted out thy sins through thy Redeemer's blood. The Father blots them out for the sake of His righteousness and truth. The gracious Spirit blots them out of the conscience, for the glory of the Father and the Son, and because He is *the Comforter*. Oh, what boundless bliss is here ! Believe, rejoice and love. *W. Mason.*

26. Go, in Christ's name, to the mercy-seat, and take this complete and eternal pardon as your own. To you God says, "Put Me in remembrance. Let us plead together." "Tell Me not forever of thine unfitness for My kingdom, thy rebellion and thy crimes. Tell Me of My invitations to the guilty and My promises to the lost. Tell Me of the blood that was shed to save thee. Tell Me of the tears, and prayers, and righteousness, the cross, and passion, of My Son. Show Me that thou canst trust My word. Only believe, and though thou wert as sinful as the cursing Peter or as unworthy as the persecuting Saul, I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." C. B.

28. The character just given of the people in all ages is urged not only as a proof that God's compassion must be perfectly gratuitous, but also as a reason for the strokes which they experienced. A.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XLIV.

44:1; 2 YET now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, who will help thee: Fear not, O Jacob my servant; and thou, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and streams upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up among the grass, as willows by the watercourses. One shall say, I am the LORD's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel.

6 Thus saith the LORD, the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and that shall come to pass, let them declare. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have I not declared unto thee of old, and shewed it? and ye are my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no Rock; I know not any. They that fashion a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit: and their own witnesses see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath fashioned a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed; and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; they shall fear, they shall be ashamed together. The smith maketh an axe, and worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with his strong arm: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out a line; he marketh it out with a pencil; he shapeth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compasses, and shapeth it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man, to dwell in the house. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the holm tree and the oak, and strengtheneth for himself one among the trees of the forest: he planteth a fir tree, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn; and he taketh thereof, and warmeth himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread: yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied; yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: and the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it and worshippeth, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. They know not, neither do they consider: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none calleth to mind, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

21 Remember these things, O Jacob; and Israel, for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. Sing, O ye heavens, for the LORD hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and will glorify himself in Israel.

24 Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb: I am the LORD, that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth; who is with me? that frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish: that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith of Jerusalem, She shall be inhabited; and of the cities of Judah, They shall be built, and I will raise up the waste places thereof: that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers:

28 that saith of Cyrus, *He is my shepherd*, and shall perform all my pleasure : even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built ; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

Chap. 44. This chapter opens, like the fortieth and forty-third, with cheering promises to Israel, followed by reasons for confiding in them, drawn from the wisdom, power and goodness of Jehovah. The specific promise, which constitutes the theme or basis of the prophecy, is that of abundant spiritual influences and their fruits, not only internal prosperity, but large accessions from without (verses 1-5). The pledge for the fulfilment of this promise is afforded by the proofs of God's omniscience, as contrasted with all other gods (verses 6-9). The folly of image-worship is then established by two arguments. The first is that idols are themselves the creatures of mere men (verses 10-14). The other is that they are not only made, and made by man, but made of the very same materials applied to the most trivial domestic uses (verses 15-20). From this demonstration of the power of Jehovah to perform His promise we are now brought back to the promise itself (verses 21-24). This is again confirmed by an appeal to God's creative power, and illustrated by the raising up of Cyrus as a deliverer to Israel (verses 25-28).

Here again it is important to the just interpretation of the passage that we keep in view the true relation which the main theme (the safety and prosperity of Israel) bears to the arguments and illustrations drawn from God's foreknowledge as established by prediction, from the impotence of idols and the raising up of Cyrus. Through all these varied forms of promise and of reasoning there runs a thread uniting them, and this thread is the doctrine of the Church, its origin, its design and its relation to its Head and to the world around it. A.

1. All the promises and every encouraging word sent from God to them in the age of Isaiah are good for their successors through all time, being manifestly designed to strengthen their faith and hope in every age until all these great predictions of future blessings shall have been fulfilled.

2. "Thus saith Jehovah ; the same who made thee and formed thee from the womb will help thee." The fact of His having given spiritual existence to Israel, a new-born, regenerated people, and of His having sustained them ever since their birth, guarantees all future blessings which they may need. So, let them never fear. (See the argument of Paul,

Rom. 8 : 28-39, and his confidence as expressed in Phil. 1 : 6.) "Jeshurun," another name for Jacob, occurs elsewhere only in De. 32 : 15 and 33 : 5, 26. Etymologically it means the *upright one*.

3. The pouring forth of water, in showers or otherwise, is a frequent figure for the bestowment of copious blessings. Thus Mal. 3 : 10 and Ezek. 34 : 26. That this passage refers to the spirit is shown by the parallelism, "I will pour My spirit upon thy seed ; My blessing upon thine offspring." The same phraseology appears in chap. 32 : 15, "Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high." (See also Joel 2 : 28 ; and in the New Testament such passages as John 7 : 37-39 ; Acts 2 : 17, 33.) H. C.

This is one of the most glorious utterances of the Scriptures of the Old Testament ; one of those by which Isaiah has deserved the title of the fifth evangelist. But may it not be termed the summary of all God's promises regarding spiritual blessings to be expected in the fulness of the times ; and although the impressive introduction had not been present, "Thus saith the Lord that made thee," who does not feel at once that it is the voice of God and not of man we hear ?

There are no *promises* so ample as those which are directed to all whose souls have learned to thirst after the living God. In the Lord's good time they are quickened by fresh streams of life, and not one soul that believes but shall find the fulfilment of this word so as to call forth eternal gratitude. *Van O.*

The office of the blessed spirit is to inspire every Christian for his life-work, to be an inward power in the soul, to be a substitute to the Church for the inspiring visible presence of Jesus Himself till at the end of the world He shall come in His glorious second advent. There is a sense of inspiration in the very knowledge of the fact that we have the perpetual presence of such wisdom, power and love. The idea of a Divine Comforter ever within—the revealer of truth, the bestower of grace, the inworking spiritual life of the soul, as it were the Lord Jesus become an invisible guardian—this of itself ennobles and animates the believer, when it fully possesses the mind. It brings God near, and makes Him as an atmosphere to the soul, a source of perpetual health and vigor. Faith in such boundless aid near at hand, in a spiritual potency which ac-

companies us at every step, is natural and easy ; and thus the child-like, trustful spirit is begotten, which is the secret of all progress and piety. W. W. P.

Inspiration-force Christ arranges for and promises in the gift of the spirit. He enters the soul to fill out every lack. He communicates, inbreathes, sheds abroad Himself, configuring it inwardly to all that is most perfect in Himself. We have nothing to do but to be in the spirit, and keep ourselves in Christ's dear walk and company, and we shall be set on surely and constantly toward the completeness required. Christ is the mirror that glasses God's image for us, and the spirit is the plastic force within, that transfers and photographs that image ; and so, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord. *Bushnell.*

My blessing upon thine offspring.

The text further suggests : 1. That God will pour His blessing on the children of His people—a promise which in all ages, when parents are faithful, is abundantly fulfilled. 2. That one of the richest blessings which can be imparted to a people is that God's spirit should descend on their children. Nothing can be better fitted to comfort them in calamity and trial. 3. That the spirit of God alone is the source of true happiness and prosperity to our children. All else—property, learning, accomplishment, beauty, vigor, will be vain. It is by His blessing only—by the influence of piety—that they will spring forth as among the grass, and like willows by the streams of water. 4. Parents should seek this blessing as the richest inheritance which they can have for their children. Parents may leave the world in peace if they see the Divine blessing—the spirit of God descend on their children. *Barnes.*

4. This is a picture of fertility, verdure and beauty, to represent the fruits of holiness under the effusions of the Spirit of God. These fruits shall spring up and grow as grass and willows in tropical countries where moisture abounds by the river's side. H. C.

5. It is commonly agreed that this verse predicts the accession of the Gentiles, whom it represents as publicly professing their allegiance to Jehovah and attachment to His people. The act of calling one by name, and that of calling on His name (invoking Him), are intimately blended in the Hebrew usage. Most interpreters understand it here as meaning to praise or celebrate. A.

6-8. The message here reverts from "the new things," the future outpouring of the Spirit on all the people of Israel, to the controversy with idolatry in Isaiah's days. The King of Israel, his Redeemer, the First and the Last, are all titles given expressly to our Lord in the New Testament (Job 1 : 49 ; Luke 24 : 21 ; Gal. 4 : 5 ; Rev. 1 : 11 ; 2 : 8 ; 22 : 13). The main subject, then, is Israel's redemption from first to last, and the words, "beside Me there is no God," are the text of that stern condemnation of idolatry with which this new division of the prophecy begins. *Birks.*

6. **Thus saith the Lord, I am the first, etc.** In the Revelation Jesus Christ says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (Rev. 22 : 13). These titles of "the first" and "the last" are confined in the prophet to him alone, "besides whom there is no God." But Jesus hath assumed these titles to Himself ; therefore Jesus is that God, besides whom there is no other. *Jones of Nayland.*

7. In these prophecies every reader is summoned to observe and recognize a foresight, superhuman and truly Divine.

8. The servants of a God so wise and so mighty have no need to fear. His promises to Israel are not of yesterday, but from the days of their fathers. The pronoun, *ye*, is emphatic. The whole history of the Jews is one public testimony to the reality and nature of God's moral government of the world. The true God is the only foundation of solid hope, a Rock to His people. There is no help whatever in idols, but in Him alone. *Birks.*

Without belief in a personal God we can have no religion, and without religion we can have really no life to speak of, no life that a man who has once experienced the joy and the hope and the strength of religion would count life at all. There can be no personal intercourse or relationship between us and an impersonal, unknowable First Cause. With a blind, material, mechanical First Cause we can have no communion, for we ourselves are more than material, more than mechanical. We can think, we can propose ends to ourselves, we are conscious of right and of wrong, we can conceive of one great purpose and idea that the whole mass of men can together work out ; and, therefore, we crave communion with One who can cherish purpose, and who can guide the whole world to one righteous end. We must, in short, have both our intellect and our moral nature satisfied, and this can be only in One who originates and guides all things with reason and

with righteousness. The world becomes rational to us, the world becomes moral only when we believe in a God Himself rational and moral. *Dods.*

The more we dwell on it, the more we shall see that the character of the God of the Bible is absolutely perfect, and therefore, either the God of Christianity is the true God, or there can be no being who shall be God to us—none who shall meet that conception of absolute perfection which we form in our minds, and feel that we must transfer to Him. *M. H.*

12. The general meaning is clear. You are introduced into the blacksmith's shop; you see the worker in iron getting a red heat upon it in his coals, giving shape to it with his hammer, working it with his strong right arm; but these makers of gods have their human weaknesses. This smith becomes hungry and his strength fails him; having no water to drink, he becomes faint. The poor man has worked hard to make a god; but the god ministers nothing to his help and strength in his time of need! Would not he, if he were a sensible, decent idol, and had any power to befriend his worshippers? *H. C.*

13. In this and the following verses the prophet exposes the absurdity of image-worship; for what an absurdity is it for a man to dress his meat and make his god with the same stick of wood? or to think that a piece of timber hath any more divinity in it than it had before, because it is fashioned and carved into the figure of a man? The design of the prophet's argument is to show the absurdity of setting up images as the resemblances of God, and the representative objects of worship; or the supposing them to have some Divine power lodged within them; inasmuch as they have no qualities that answer such a character, being endued neither with power, life nor understanding; and are indeed nothing but what they appear to be, bare, senseless matter, wood or stone. Besides, nothing is a greater dishonor to God than to suppose Him like the image of a corruptible creature. *W. Lowth.*

14. The essential idea is that man, instead of being the creature, is in some sort the creator of the wood he worships, since it does or may owe its existence to his agency.

15. The prophet seems designedly to interchange the singular and plural forms, in order to identify with more effect the idol worshipped and the sticks consumed. He takes of them (the sticks), kindles a fire, warms himself, bakes bread, then makes a god, and worships, yes, bows down before them (the sticks of wood).

The argument of this and the succeeding verses is intended to exhibit the absurdity of worshipping the same material that is constantly applied to the most trivial domestic uses. *A.*

17. "He saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god." There where he pays his homage and allegiance, he justly looks for protection and deliverance. What a strange infatuation is this, to expect help from gods that cannot help themselves! But it is this praying to them that makes them gods, not what the smith or the carpenter did at them. What we place our confidence in for deliverance, that we make a god of. *H.*

18-20. These are the prophet's reflections and inferences. They have no heart to know the truth. They love to relieve themselves of the thought of an infinite God, holy, and ever present; and therefore God gives them up to this wretched delusion. They are judiciously blinded. Paul accounts for the rise of idolatry in this way. *H. C.*

20. Men may come to be honest atheists, but they did not begin so. They "held down the truth in unrighteousness" and "did not like to retain God in their knowledge," and "were given over to believe a lie"—what at the outset was known to be a lie. There is no error or absurdity so monstrous that the habitual sceptic will not accept it. The incredulity of credulity is absolutely amazing. *Pierson.*

21. Having completed his detailed exposure of the folly of idolatry, or rather of the impotence of idols as contrasted with the power of God, he now resumes the tone of promise and encouragement with which the chapter opens, and assures the chosen people, here personified as Israel or Jacob, that having been constituted such by Jehovah for a special purpose, they could not cease to be the objects of His watchful care. *A.*

22. The figure is twofold. As clouds hide from us the face of the sun, so transgression hides from us the face of God; and again, as God brushes away the dark clouds with infinite ease when He will, and lets the sunshine come forth with double glory and sweetness, so He takes away the thick clouds of our sins and lets His own face shine forth in unwonted radiance upon us. *H. C.*

There is a double forgiveness of sin—in heaven and in a man's own conscience; and therefore sometimes compared to the blotting out of something out of a book, sometimes to the blotting out of a cloud. To the blotting out of a book (*Isa. 43: 25*), that it may be no more remembered or charged upon us. To the blot-

ting out of a cloud, as the sun when it breaketh forth in its strength dispelleth the mists and clouds. Sin interposeth as a cloud, hindering the light of God's countenance from shining forth upon us. Both these are God's work—to blot the book and to blot out the cloud. *T. Maqton*.—Here is the work of each Divine person in the ever-glorious Trinity. God the Father blots out sins in the court of heaven; God the Son by His atonement on the cross; and God the Spirit in the court of a sinner's conscience. Behold, love speaks, grace proclaims, mercy declares, I have dispersed the cloud; I have blotted out thy sins. Grace superabounds over all the aboundings of sin. A deluge of pardoning love, mercy and grace washes away all thy transgressions. They are all dispersed like a cloud driven away by the sun. What! all this rich love, mercy and grace to such a sinner as I? and that too without any deserts of mine? Yes, all is of rich love, free grace and sovereign mercy. But behold the end of this. It is to attach thy heart to a sin-pardoning Lord. For He says, "Return unto Me." Oh, nothing attracts the gracious heart from sin, the world and vanity, to the Lord, like free and full declarations of Gospel grace and pardoning love. *W. Mason*.

If sin is opposed as well as felt; if its strivings within you lead to prayer instead of iniquity; if, through the Spirit, the passions of your nature are habitually overcome; if sin is your grief and abhorrence as well as terror; then we are as sure as the Bible can make us, that the warfare in your soul, though painful, and tumultuous, and unceasing, is no mark of the displeasure of heaven; is as plain a token as God can give you, "that He has blotted out your transgressions." *C. B.*

23. Isaiah's full heart would fain move all heaven and all the lowest depths of the earth; all the mountains and forest trees also, to one vast choral song of praise to God for what He has done and is doing to redeem Jacob and glorify Himself in Israel. "*Hath redeemed*" and "*will glorify Himself*," imply that some of this work is seen by the prophet as past, and some of it, or at least, some of its results of glory to God, are seen as future.

24-28. The remaining verses of the chapter fall under one construction and really constitute but one complete sentence. Thus saith the Lord who is thy Redeemer and thy Former from the womb; I am the Lord who maketh all things, doing also all else included in this series. These are some of His great works, enumerated to give His people more enlarged views of

His power and of His loving care of every interest of his Zion. *H. C.*

24. Maketh all things. The whole Cosmos is just as if made by God. We might go on lifting the curtain from before her face ten, twenty, never so many times, and always with the same result. Never a break in the verdict. For now some thousands of years our natural knowledge has been advancing, and the envious curtain has been rising, step by step; and never yet has the observer, after carefully looking on the picture without and carefully listening to the voice within, ever heard any other words than these: "Just as if made by God—Just as if made by God!" *Burr*.

It is the exercise of seeking and finding God and His glory beneath the veil suspended on the frame of universal nature that strengthens, enlarges and elevates the soul, and fits it, if grace be there, for the presence and enjoyment of God, when the veil is removed and the soul in the spiritual world sees no more as through a glass darkly, but face to face. The forms of nature seem to have been designed to discipline man's mind rather than to teach man knowledge; to educate and not to inform the soul is the great object for which the mind is placed within the physical senses, and surrounded by the physical world. The forms of nature are drawn around us not so much to fill us with knowledge or let light into the mind as to make us evolve it ourselves in the exercise of our own powers. *Cheever*.

27. It cannot well be doubted that the words refer primarily to the fact that God's servant Cyrus dried the bed of the Euphrates and marched his army into the city in its dry channel, under the city walls. Both Herodotus and Xenophon describe this stratagem. *H. C.*—This remarkable circumstance, in which the event so exactly corresponded with the prophecy, was also noted by Jeremiah (*Jer.* 50 : 38 ; 51 : 36). *A. C.*

28. It is now universally admitted that this verse has reference to Cyrus the Elder or the Great, the son of Cambyes, king of Persia, and the grandson of Astyages the Mede, the hero of the *Cyropædia* and of the first book of Herodotus, the same who appears in sacred history (*2 Chron.* 36 : 23 ; *Ezra* 1 : 1) as the actual restorer of the Jews from exile. He is here called *Jehovah's shepherd*, which may either be the usual poetical designation of a king, so common in the oldest classics, or (as Umbreit suggests) a special description of his mission and vocation to gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel. *A.*

The mention of Cyrus by name is here the seal to the truth and consistency of the whole message. A dim or trivial prediction would be a strange and unnatural sequel to such a glorious array of the Divine titles and perfections. The preface, in its solemnity, and the prophecy, in its clearness and importance, now agree together. The fulfilment was minutely true. The second Temple was founded under Cyrus, and through his decree, but founded only. Its completion and dedication were under Darius after twenty years' delay. *Birks.*

It is only at occasional times and in slight degrees that the veil is withdrawn which hides the counsels of the Lord with reference to man, and man is permitted to see that each individual in his limited sphere and nations in their comparatively mighty influence are but instruments working out the counsels of the Most High. Pharaoh, or Cyrus, or the great Assyrian monarchs, or the Jewish race—how great the influence which they exercised on the destinies of mankind! Yet the Almighty God declares of each of them, that in the exercise of that influence they were but carrying out His will; thereby intimating to us (what our own natural conception of the Almighty might lead us to expect) that all things, small and great, good and evil, are foreseen by His omniscient eye, and work out the purposes of His wisdom and His love. *Karslake.*

Those critics who deny that the original Isaiah could have been the author of these

chapters make great account of the minuteness of this prophecy, which even gives the name of Cyrus, though he became king almost two centuries after the death of Hezekiah. They aver that such minuteness of detail is without a parallel, and is entirely foreign from the style of Scripture prophecy. All other prophecies, they say, are general in their statements—so general that human sagacity, coupled with a sort of public anticipation of better days yet to come, will amply suffice to account for their existence. The points to be made in reply to these positions are of this sort: 1. The affirmations made in respect to the general indefiniteness of prophecy are entirely too strong to correspond with the facts. Witness the prophecies respecting the Messiah—one person, mentioned by name, with a very great number of special and minute circumstances connected with His birth, life, spirit, teachings, miracles and death. Witness also the prophecies respecting the fall of Babylon (Jer. 50 and 51; also Isa. 13 and 21:1-10). 2. The particular circumstance of naming a king has its parallel in the case of Josiah, whose name was given in prophecy as far back as the reign of Jeroboam I., B.C. 975, and was fulfilled in Josiah's reformation, B.C. 630. (See 1 K. 13:2 and 2 K. 23:15-20.) 3. It being admitted that prophecy is by inspiration of God, it can be no objection to any given case of prediction that it is unusually specific and definite. God will shape this feature according to His own wisdom. H. C.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XLV.

45:1 Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings ; to open the doors before him,
 2 and the gates shall not be shut ; I will go before thee, and make the rugged places plain : I
 3 will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron : and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that
 4 I am the LORD, which call thee by thy name, even the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I have called thee by thy name : I have surnamed thee,
 5 though thou hast not known me. I am the LORD, and there is none else ; beside me there is
 6 no God : I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me : that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me : I am the LORD, and there
 7 is none else. I form the light, and create darkness ; I make peace, and create evil ; I am the LORD, that doeth all these things.
 8 Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness : let the earth open, that they may bring forth salvation, and let her cause righteousness to spring up together ; I the LORD have created it.
 9 Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker ! a potsherd among the potsherds of the earth ! Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou ? or thy work, He hath no
 10 hands ? Woe unto him that saith unto a father, What begettest thou ? or to a woman, With
 11 what travailest thou ? Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker : Ask me of the things that are to come ; concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my
 12 hands, command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it : I, even my
 13 hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways : he shall build my city, and he shall let my exiles go free, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts.
 14 Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and the merchandise of Ethiopia, and the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine ; they shall go after thee ; in chains they shall come over : and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, *saying*, Surely God is in thee ; and there is none else, there is no
 15, 16 God. Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour. They shall be ashamed, yea, confounded, all of them : they shall go into confusion together that are
 17 makers of idols. *But* Israel shall be saved by the LORD with an everlasting salvation : ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.
 18 For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens ; he is God ; that formed the earth and made it ; he established it, he created it not a waste, he formed it to be inhabited : I am the
 19 LORD ; and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in a place of the land of darkness ; I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain : I the LORD speak righteousness,
 20 I declare things that are right. Assemble yourselves and come ; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations : they have no knowledge that carry the wood of their graven
 21 image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Declare ye, and bring *it* forth ; yea, let them take counsel together : who hath shewed this from ancient time ? who hath declared it of old ? have not I the LORD ? and there is no God else beside me ; a just God and a saviour ;
 22 there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth : for I am
 23 God, and there is none else. By myself have I sworn, the word is gone forth from my mouth *in* righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall
 24 swear. Only in the LORD, shall one say unto me, is righteousness and strength : even to him
 25 shall men come, and all they that were incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

Chap. 45. This chapter continues the same general course of thought, beginning with a further description of the victories of Cyrus, and of his work as the deliverer of God's people ; and then making this great event the occasion and the ground for renewed declarations

of God's infinite supremacy ; of His worthiness to be trusted ; of His purpose to confound all idols and idol-worshippers, and, with the co-operation of His true people, to bring all nations to acknowledge His name and to worship at His feet. H. C.—As to the order and arrangement of the parts, the chapter opens, in direct continuation of the forty-fourth, with a further prophecy of Cyrus and of his successes (verses 1-3). These are then referred to the power of God and His design of mercy toward His people, so that all misgivings or distrust must be irrational and impious (verses 4-13). Then leaving Cyrus out of view, the prophet turns his eyes to the nations, and declares that they must be subdued, but only in order to be blessed and saved, which is declared to have been the Divine purpose and revealed as such from the beginning (verses 14-25). A.

1. Remarkably the Lord applies to Cyrus the same descriptive term, "anointed," by which Jesus Christ is usually designated in prophecy. "Messiah" means precisely *the anointed One*, and is the very Hebrew word used here. The just view seems to be that Cyrus was anointed as king for the special work which the Lord had for him to do, as Jesus was for His special work, while yet their respective missions were exceedingly unlike. "To subdue nations" receives from history a striking fulfilment. H. C.—It can scarcely be considered a fortuitous coincidence that Herodotus speaks of the gate which led to the river as having been left open on the night of the attack. Xenophon says the doors of the palace itself having been unguardedly opened, the invaders took possession of it almost without resistance. A.

Loose the loins. There is a special allusion to the night when the handwriting appeared on the wall, when "the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote together one against another" (Dan. 5:6). The opening of the doors and gates has a similar reference to that night of revelry, when the river-gates were carelessly left unclosed. *Birks*.

2. The gates of brass. In every side of the great square wall which encompassed Babylon were twenty-five gates, one hundred in all, of solid brass ; those which led to the river and those which enclosed the temple of Belus were of the same material. *Prideaux*.—Without doubt, the distinct prediction by Isaiah, of a matter so much beyond the range of common experience, must have had great weight upon the mind of Cyrus, in convincing

him not only that the prophecy was true, but the Divine Author of that prophecy was He who had indeed made straight his path before him, and who had opened to him the two-leaved gates of the numerous strong cities which he had won. *Kitto*.

Herodotus, the ancient historian of the event, writing seventy years afterward, comments upon it in this manner : " If the besieged had been aware of the designs of Cyrus, they might have destroyed his troops. They had only to secure the *folding gates* leading to the river, and to have manned the embankments on either side, and they would have enclosed the Persians in a trap from which they could never have escaped. *As it happened*, they were taken by surprise ; and such is the extent of the city, that they who lived in the extremities were made prisoners before the alarm reached the palace." " As it happened." Yes, it happened ; but a hundred and more years before God had said by His prophet *how* it should happen. He had said, "I will open the two-leaved gates." So Cyrus found them wide open, and the way clear to the very banquet-hall of the palace, just as Isaiah had said, before Cyrus was born, that they should be. *Phelps*.

3. It is thought by some eminent writers that no conquests have ever been attended with such acquisition of wealth as those of Cyrus. The last clause gives a reason why this circumstance is mentioned—viz., in order that Cyrus might be able to identify the being who brought it to pass with the being who foretold it.

5. What is said before of naming him is here said of girding him—*i.e.*, investing him with royal dignity or personally strengthening him ; both may be included. A.

6. These manifestations of the great God, both in His antecedent predictions respecting Cyrus and in His wonderful providences in fulfilling them, had a vastly important purpose—viz., to make the true God known over all that Eastern world ; to give them such demonstrations of His being, His omniscience and His universal providence as should at least suffice to convince all candid minds that He is the one only and infinite God, and that there can be no other besides.

7. The statements made in the previous verses give the clue (probably) to the special significance of this—viz., that the people of the distant East, the regions of the rising sun, might know that there is no God besides Me. For Persia, pre-eminently to the Hebrews the land of the rising sun, was the home of the

celebrated doctrine of Zoroaster, taught in the Zend-Avesta—viz., that there is *not* one God only, but virtually two; one the author of all good, the other, of all evil; one, the former of light; the other, of darkness. But squarely in opposition to this dualistic system, and that His word might go at once through all that Eastern world whence Cyrus came, the Lord here affirms that He alone both formed the light and created the darkness; both makes peace and creates evil; He, the one supreme Lord God, doeth all these things.

8. When this ardent prophet, speaking for God and in sympathy with God, would summon all the active powers of the race to any special work, he is wont to call upon the heavens and the earth, as if to arouse all the realms of nature to combine and to help forward the mighty endeavor. H. C.

The figure is varied and complete. The heavens are to distil righteousness, like dew, and the skies to pour it down in copious showers. The earth is to open her bosom, and to receive these gifts of heaven. Both, in concert, are thus to yield the fruit of salvation; and the earth is to bring forth righteousness in response to the floods of righteousness from on high. *Birks.*

It is descriptive, doubtless, of what is *yet* to take place under the Messiah on the earth, in the better days which are to succeed to the present, when the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth. The heavens shall drop down righteousness, and the clouds shall distil salvation, and the earth shall bring forth the fruits of holiness, and the world shall be full of the love of God. All the earth shall be blessed, as if descending showers should produce universal fertility, and every land, now desolate, barren and sterile, and horrid by sin, shall become "like a well-watered garden" in reference to salvation, and shall be full of the fruits of holiness. *Barnes.*

There is here the first sign of transition, in this prophecy, from Cyrus to the days of Messiah. The Lord, having been revealed as the true God, in contrast to idols and Persian dualism, and also as the God of Israel, is further revealed as the God of all grace, righteousness and salvation. The mercies to the returning exiles were an earnest of this promise. But its main fulfilment is in the Incarnation and Atonement of our Lord, and the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit. Then "truth flourished out of the earth, and righteousness looked down from heaven." *Birks.*

9, 10. Shall the clay pretend to be wiser

than the potter, and therefore to advise him; or mightier than the potter, and therefore to control him? He that gave us being, that gave us this being, may design concerning us, and dispose of us as He pleases; and it is presumption for us to prescribe to Him. Shall we impeach God's wisdom or question His power, who are ourselves so curiously, so wonderfully made? Shall we say He has no hands whose hands made us, and in whose hands we are? The doctrine of God's sovereignty has enough in it to silence all our discontents and objections against the methods of His providence and grace (Rom. 9:20, 21). H.

11. The logical connection of thought here is plain and beautiful. Instead of presuming to call in question the wisdom and goodness of God, the Great Maker and Ruler of all, go rather to Him in due humility and ask Him to reveal the future destinies of His sons, since these are all determined in His all-wise plans and counsels; and in respect to the work of His hands, *commit* all to Him. H. C.

12. This is a statement of the reason why He could be trusted to protect His people—viz., because He was almighty and had proved Himself to be so in creation. A.

13. I, the same God who created all worlds, evermore controlling all events, have also raised up *him*, Cyrus. I have done it *in righteousness—i.e.*, for purposes of justice and righteousness both toward my people, whom I am to redeem, and toward the guilty king of Babylon, whom in justice I must destroy. The words do not refer to the character of Cyrus as good or just, but to the purpose of God in raising him up. The last clause means that Cyrus would send home those Jewish exiles without demanding any redemption price, doing it of his own generous and free will.

14. The next thought in order is the accession of the Gentiles to the true Church of God, with their wealth, and of course with their hearts. Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sabeans are named here because they are named in chap. 43:3, and as specimens of the whole Gentile world, the promise applying not less to all other nations. H. C.

15. An apostrophe, expressive of the prophet's own strong feelings in contrasting what God had done and would yet do, the darkness of the present with the brightness of the future. If these things are to be hereafter, then oh, Thou Saviour of Thy people, Thou art indeed a God that hides Himself—that is to say, conceals His purposes of mercy under the darkness of His present dispensations. A.—

When God is acting as Israel's God and Saviour, "commonly His way is in the sea" (Ps. 77: 19). The salvation of the Church is carried on in a mysterious way, by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts working on men's spirits (Zech. 4: 6), by weak and unlikely instruments, small and accidental occurrences, and not wrought till the last extremity; but this is our comfort, though God hide Himself, we are sure He is "the God of Israel, the Saviour." H.

We know enough of God to love and adore Him without His explaining to us all the principles of His government. It enters into His character as a sovereign to conceal some of the reasons of His conduct from His subjects. He is a God that *hideth* Himself. If it were otherwise, He would not be God. And it is best for us that it should be so. It is best for our education that it should be conducted under a system of mysteries. It does not cramp the intellect. It does not impair its freedom. A wish to solve every mystery is indicative of anything but profoundness of views or goodness of heart. Such a system as that under which we live keeps the curiosity awake, ennobles the soul, shows it the greatness of the kingdom into which it is introduced, inspires it with reverential awe, enlarges its capacities, and fits it for its destinies. *B. B. Edwards.*

How often the people of God say with the prophet, "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour!" It is true a steadfast faith in the providence of God, that all that He does and all that He permits and disposes is best, will quiet the passions and change the tempestuous ocean into the pacific sea; but when they are admitted into the council of state above and see the immediate reasons of His decrees, what a heavenly wonder, what an exquisite pleasure will fill their minds? When the original fountains of wisdom, as clear as deep, shall be opened, what sweet satisfaction will be shed abroad in their spirits? They will see the beauty of providence in disposing temporal evils in order to their eternal felicity; that as in a curious picture the darkest tinctures are so disposed as to give light and grace to orient colors, so all the afflictions of this state were but shadows or foils, to make their faith, and love, and patience more resplendent, and their reward more excellent. What our Saviour said to Peter is applicable to the impenetrable dispensations of providence to us in our mortal state: "What I do, thou knowest not now, but shalt know hereafter." Then the secrets of His counsels

shall be unsealed, and we shall understand that His overruling providence is most eminently glorified in extracting good out of evil, *for we shall know as we are known.* Bates.

16, 17. Two grand facts are here put in antithesis: 1. That the makers of idols shall be confounded and put to shame. 2. That the true Israel shall be saved with everlasting salvation and never be put to shame through disappointment by the failure of her God to fulfil His promises. These promises, now fresh in mind and deeply affecting, are in these words guaranteed against possible failure.

18. That God "made the earth to be inhabited" is significant here in connection with this prophecy of the ultimate conversion of the nations, as much as to say, I have not only made this earth "all very good," but I made it to sustain a vast population, and my ultimate purpose is to bring all these nations up to the gates of Zion to say there, "Surely God is in Thee, and there is none else, no other God." H. C.

19. As He has in His word invited them to seek Him, so He never denied their believing prayers nor disappointed their believing expectations. He said not to them, to any of them, "Seek ye Me in vain;" for if He did not think fit to give them the particular thing they prayed for, yet He gave them grace sufficient and the comfort and satisfaction of soul which were equivalent. God not only gives a gracious answer to, but will be the bountiful rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. H.

It should be enough for us to know that God has established an unfulfilling connection between prayer and blessing; enough that He has promised to answer prayer. We will leave it to Him to reconcile such absolute promises with His sovereignty and immutability. If He see nothing inconsistent in the promise and the purpose, if He assure us that He does not resign His sceptre or falter in His administration while actually answering a human call upon His interposition, it should satisfy us. The difficulties of the case should not trouble us if they do not trouble God. If we become entangled with them our prayers will surely be hindered. R. S. S.

Prayer is as much a means as anything else. It seizes the arm that moves the stars. It is a great force, not a physical, which you can measure, but a moral force acting on the mind of God, inducing Him to do what He would not do if we did not pray. It is by the regenerate, through Christ, by one who believes in it as an ordinance of God, submissive, accom-

panied by earnest and intelligent use of all the available means, and is always answered ; either (1) What you ask is granted ; or (2) in a different form at some other time ; or (3) something else and better is given. When your child asks you for something which your wisdom sees is hurtful, you do not grant it, or you give it something better. Our heavenly Father never gives us a stone when we ask for bread, but, thanks be to His name, He often gives us bread when we ask for a stone. *A. A. Hodge.*

Desires breathed to God are not in vain, but they must be accompanied with seeking, which is effort. What do we do to secure possession of the gifts for which we pray ? Spiritual character is not built up in answer to wishes only, whether spoken or unspoken. We have to seek for the treasure, not as if we did not know where it was, but as gold-diggers, who seek for it on their claim, because they know that it is there. The effort is to be continuous. *A. M.*

It is a mistake, a dangerous error to suppose that man should pray only when his heart prompts. Knowest thou not that the soul is stimulated to prayer by prayer itself ? How to approach Him who approacheth you so graciously, you know. Seek the still hour every day. Read the holy Scriptures every day. Attend, every hour and every instant, to every attracting influence of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit keepeth silence, then cling to your prayer. *Tholuck.*

20, 21. To hasten the desired and promised result of converting the nations to God, the summons goes forth, Call them together ; let us have a vast convocation ; let all those who have survived the judgments of God on guilty nations gather together ; let them consider first how utterly ignorant and senseless are all those who set up the wood of their graven image and pray to a god who cannot save. Then let them also consider who hath brought out such minute and wonderful predictions of the distant future, which have moreover been so accurately fulfilled. Is not He who hath done all this the true Jehovah, the omniscient God ? Do not these fulfilled predictions prove Him to be indeed the one only God ? Yea, let them know that He is a just God and a Saviour, combining perfect justice with boundless mercy ; a God whom sinners should fear to offend, yet dare to approach suppliantly, and to whom they should surely be attracted by His great mercies. *H. C.*

21. A just God, and a Saviour. The Incarnate Son of God is the Bread of Life. There is no Gospel left when He is stripped of

His Deity ; nothing remains but precept and example, empty platitudes about virtues and graces without redeeming energy to set the heart on fire and make life an inspiration. "Thy Saviour is thy God !" that makes all things new ; that seals my free and full forgiveness ; that makes my sonship real and indestructible ; that makes my faith omnipotent ; that makes me glory in tribulation and infirmities ; that makes me sure of holiness and heaven ; that sets the flaming cross for me in the blackest firmament ; that makes the open grave the Mecca of my perpetual pilgrimage. *Behrends.*

When God absolves, it is only in one way—that is, through a Mediator. God cannot forgive sin at the expense of His justice, His holiness or His truth. It is through the blood of Christ alone that He can do this. Justice asked for the sufferings of a man—Christ rendered the sufferings of a God ; hence the Fount of Infinite Justice now waits to forgive ; and He forgives, for Christ's sake, the moment that we ask Him. He is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. *Cumming.*

In this revelation of God in Christ is the assurance that that Holy One, in whose presence angelic purity grows dim, stoops to take the very nature of the guilty, and blend it in mysterious affiance with His own. More than this : the purity of heaven incarnate exposes itself to a long-continued companionship with evil, permits itself to be pierced with all the anguish that sin's hostility could inflict upon it, and at last yields up itself as sin's victim into the hands of death. Yet, with all this, from first to last, infinitely loving right, unerringly cognizant of man's guilt, taking the full gauge of the abhorrent nature of that which He forgave, Jesus is seen with mercy ever on His lip, forgiveness, compassion, love to sinners in His every look and act. And further, the Gospel permits us to think of Christ as one who, in conveying pardon to guilt, instead of relaxing the strictness or bringing slight on the unbending rectitude of God's law, offers up the grandest possible tribute to its majesty and the most awful atonement for the sins that infringed it. Here, therefore, in this Gospel of Christ is the most ample provision made for the guilty spirit's needs. Though my sin cannot be literally unsinned, though the past is irrevocable, yet surely in this my trembling heart may find the rest for which it craves—the assurance that the past may be forgotten, and that sin is blotted out by an act in which its guilt is most fearfully condemned and expiated—when I behold

the very God who is Law, Righteousness, Absolute Justice, in human form offering Himself up to the death to save me. *Caird.*

Everything which punishment, in its own nature, as a mere sanction of law, involves, is involved in the great sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ; and more, for punishment, strictly speaking, has no remedial influence about it. Penalty contemplates not so much the good of the offender as the good of the community or state whose rights he has outraged and whose interests he has sacrificed. The atonement of Jesus Christ contemplates both. By one and the same means it upholds and illustrates the righteousness of God, and reforms and renews the guilty. It constitutes the mightiest, nay the only power which can be brought to bear upon the alienated heart, and recover it to the love and service of its rightful Sovereign; and thus it gives to justice all its claims, and affords goodness free scope for its exercise; makes kindness to the sinner consistent with righteousness—blends mercy and truth, good will and justice together, showing to every intelligent being how God can be just and yet justify the sinner. *E. M.*

There is a just God over all, for men ever reap just what they sow. But justice in God is something far grander than the mere exercise of retribution; it is the love of eternal truth, purity, righteousness; and the penalties of untruth, impurity, unrighteousness are the out-flashings of that holy anger which is founded in His love of the right, the pure and the true. In the same way God's salvation is more than the mere deliverance from penalty. It is a deliverance from penalty; it is a salvation from the miseries of sin and the agonies inflicted on the soul by the remorse of conscience. But it is at the same time far greater than this; it is the deliverance from evil, salvation from the cruel lusts of wrong; from the bondage of unholy passions growing into the giant-life of eternity; from the deep degradation and horrible selfishness of sin. That is the salvation of God. Here, then, we see how His justice and His salvation are in perfect harmony. His salvation is to free men from the penalties of justice by making them righteous, true and holy in Christ. And thus the purpose of God the Saviour is to change men into the image of God the Just. His justice is not merely a holy anger against all the violations of truth, and righteousness, and purity, but a deep desire to make men like Himself—just, and holy, and true. In a word, God would save men from evil by making them righteous;

and thus He is at once the just God and the Saviour. *R. T.*

22. These great truths crystallize into this broad and blessed invitation, addressed to all people on the wide earth—the most remote as well as the least—saying: “Look unto Me and be ye saved.” *H. C.*

This is said in view of the declaration made in the previous verse, that He is a just God and a Saviour. It is *because* He sustains this character that all are invited to look to Him; and the doctrine is that the fact that God is at the same time just, and yet a Saviour, or can save consistently *with* His justice, is an argument why they should look to Him, and confide in Him. If He is at the same time just—true to His promises; righteous in His dealings; maintaining the honor of His law and His government, and showing His hatred of sin; and also merciful, kind and forgiving, it is a ground of confidence in Him. The direction to look to God for salvation implies a deep conviction that we cannot redeem ourselves; a deep feeling that salvation is necessary; a deep conviction of helplessness and of sin; and a deep conviction that He only can save.

All the Ends of the Earth. The invitation here proves, 1. That the offers of the Gospel are universal. None are excluded. The ends of the earth, the remotest parts of the world, are invited to embrace salvation, and all those portions of the earth might, under this invitation, come and accept the offers of life. 2. That God is willing to save all, or desirous that all should be saved—since He would not give an invitation at all unless He was *desirous* that they should accept of it; nor would He give an invitation unless He was *willing* to save them. 3. That there is ample provision for their salvation—since God could not invite them to accept of what was not provided for them, nor could He ask them to partake of salvation which had no existence. 4. That it is His serious and settled purpose that all the ends of the earth *shall be* invited to embrace the offers of life. The invitation has gone from His lips, and the command has gone forth that it should be carried to every creature, and now it appertains to His Church to carry the glad news of salvation around the world. God intends that it shall be done; and on His Church rests the responsibility of seeing it speedily executed. *Barnes.*

Strange as it is, yet so it is; we can turn round upon Sovereign Fatherhood bidding us, to His service and say, “*I will not.*” He pleads with us, and we can resist His pleadings. He

holds out the mercies of His hands and the gifts of His grace, and we can reject them. We cannot cease to be the objects of His love, but we can refuse to be the recipients of its most precious gifts. We can bar our hearts against it. Then of what avail is it to us? Not to accept is to refuse; non-submission is rebellion. We do not need to emphasize our refusal by any action—no need to lift our clenched hands in defiance. We have simply to put them behind our backs or to keep them folded. The closed hand must remain an empty hand. “He that believeth not is condemned.” Remember that when Christ pleads and draws, to do nothing is to oppose, and to delay is to refuse. It is a very easy matter to ruin your soul. You have simply to keep still when He says, “*Look unto Me, and be ye saved.*” And all the rest will follow of itself. A. M.

Our salvation is not to be deferred to a distant judgment and a distant heaven. God would save us here, and save us now. He would inspire us with hope, bless us with peace and anoint us with gladness. He would bring our humanity under His curative and restorative power. He has actually accomplished this in regard to many. We see and know the men who are actually resuscitated and in process of being restored. They are not perfect. They are not holy as man was in Eden. They are not like the angels. They are men—heirs of all the ills to which our nature is subject; they have sinned; they have wept; but they have begun to hope and begun to live. The salvation begun will be carried on to perfection. W. Adams.

23. God is supreme, and will yet be acknowledged to be so by every rational being. Every knee shall bow to Him in this acknowledgment—freely and lovingly, or by compulsion and fear, for the language of this statement is not restricted to the voluntary submission of real converts. It is (apparently of purpose) made sufficiently general to include both the voluntary submission of the redeemed and the coerced subjection of the incorrigibly impenitent. Paul quotes this passage twice, first applying it (Rom. 14:11) to the whole world standing before Christ’s judgment-seat and recognizing His infinite supremacy there; and again (Phil. 2:9-11) to Christ’s glorious exaltation by the Father to the throne of the universe. H. C.

24. In the Lord the captive Jews had righteousness; grace both to sanctify their afflictions to them and to qualify them for deliverance, and strength for their support and escape. In the

Lord Jesus we have righteousness to recommend us to the good will of God toward us, and strength to begin and carry on the good work of God in us; He is the Fountain of both, and on Him we must depend for both, must “go forth in His strength and make mention of His righteousness” (Ps. 71:16). H.—No soldier of His goeth a warfare at his own charge. Christ being both their righteousness and strength, they can want nothing—neither riches nor power. Hence they go on from day to day, glorying in Him as their richest treasure, and trusting in Him as their almighty strength; and this is their constant song in the house of their pilgrimage and all their journey through: “Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.” Jesus’ righteousness inspires the soul with boldness before God. Jesus’ strength obtains victory over every enemy. This is the triumph of faith. So believers walk safely and comfortably. W. Mason.

In all thy love and well-doing gird thyself up to improve and use aright what remains free in thee, and if thou doest aught aright, say and thankfully believe that Christ hath done it for thee. Oh, what a miserable, despairing wretch should I be if I gave up the faith that the life of Christ would precipitate the remaining dregs of sin in the crisis of death, and that I should rise in purer capacity of Christ, blind, to be irradiated by His light, empty, to be possessed by His fulness, naked of merit, to be clothed by His righteousness! Coleridge.

25. The verse is really intended to wind up the previous addresses to the Gentiles with a solemn declaration of their true relation to the chosen people, as composed of those who really believed and feared God, whether Jews or Gentiles. This principle was recognized in every admission of a proselyte to the communion of the ancient Church, and is repeatedly asserted as a fundamental law of the Christian Church (Rom. 10:12; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). A.

All believers are the seed of Israel, an upright, praying seed. The great privilege they enjoy by Jesus Christ is that in Him and for His sake they are justified before God, Christ being made of God to them righteousness. All that are justified will own it is in Christ that they are justified, nor could they be justified by any other; and those who are justified shall be glorified. And, therefore, the great duty believers owe to Christ is to glory in Him and to make their boast of Him; therefore He is made all in all to us, that “whoso glories, may glory in the Lord;” and let us comply with this intention. H.

ISAIAH, CHAPTERS XLVI., XLVII.

46:1 BEL boweth down, Nebo stoopeth ; their idols are upon the beasts, and upon the
 2 cattle : the things that ye carried about are made a load, a burden to the weary *beast*. They
 stoop, they bow down together ; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone
 into captivity.

3 Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which have
 4 been borne *by me* from the belly, which have been carried from the womb : and even to old
 age I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry *you* : I have made, and I will bear ; yea, I
 5 will carry, and will deliver. To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare
 6 me, that we may be like ? Such as lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the bal-
 ance, they hire a goldsmith, and he maketh it a god ; they fall down, yea, they worship.
 7 They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth ;
 from his place shall he not remove : yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor
 save him out of his trouble.
 8 Remember this, and shew yourselves men : bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors.
 9 Remember the former things of old : for I am God, and there is none else ; *I am* God, and
 10 there is none like me ; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times
 things that are not *yet* done ; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure :
 11 calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country ; yea, I
 12 have spoken, I will also bring it to pass ; I have purposed, I will also do it. Hearken unto
 13 me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness : I bring near my righteousness, it shall
 not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry ; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel
 my glory.

47:1 Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon ; sit on the ground
 without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans : for thou shalt no more be called tender and
 2 delicate. Take the millstones, and grind meal : remove thy veil, strip off the train, uncover
 3 the leg, pass through the rivers. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be
 4 seen : I will take vengeance, and will accept no man. Our redeemer, the LORD of hosts is
 5 his name, the Holy One of Israel. Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of
 6 the Chaldeans : for thou shalt no more be called The lady of kingdoms. I was wroth with
 my people, I profaned mine inheritance, and gave them into thine hand : thou didst shew
 7 them no mercy ; upon the aged hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke. And thou saidst, I
 shall be a lady for ever : so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst
 remember the latter end thereof.
 8 Now therefore hear this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that
 sayest in thine heart, I am, and there is none else beside me ; I shall not sit as a widow,
 9 neither shall I know the loss of children ; but these two things shall come to thee in a
 moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood : in their full measure shall they
 come upon thee, despite of the multitude of thy sorceries, and the great abundance of thine
 10 enchantments. For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness ; thou hast said, None seeth me ;
 thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee : and thou hast said in thine heart, I
 11 am, and there is none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee ; thou shalt not
 know the dawning thereof : and mischief shall fall upon thee ; thou shalt not be able to put
 12 it away : and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou knowest not. Stand
 now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast
 laboured from thy youth ; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.
 13 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels : let now the astrologers, the stargazers,
 the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from the things that shall come upon
 14 thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble ; the fire shall burn them ; they shall not deliver
 themselves from the power of the flame : it shall not be a coal to warm at, nor a fire to sit
 15 before. Thus shall the things be unto thee wherein thou hast laboured : they that have
 trafficked with thee from thy youth shall wander every one to his quarter ; there shall be
 none to save thee.

Chap. 46. The transition is easy and natural, from the deliverance of Israel by Cyrus, and the richer blessings to follow in the days of the promised Messiah, to the downfall of Babylon and its idols. The prophecy then continues with a vivid picture of the images of the gods of Babylon, turned into packages on the backs of weary beasts, instead of being carried aloft in stately procession, and unable to free themselves or their owners from the power of the conquerors. *Birks.*

The case so often put already in these later prophecies, *Jehovah versus idols*, becomes in this chapter specific—God *versus* the idols of Babylon. The great city is seen in prophetic vision, conquered; the vanquished people pack their helpless images upon their beasts of burden to bear them away; the heavy-laden animals stagger and sink under their load, and the god himself is powerless to help. But Jehovah, instead of being borne, Himself bears His people; and shall He be compared to a graven or a molten god? Once more the Lord appeals to His past achievements and to the mission of Cyrus, so signally fulfilling the Divine counsels, and closes with exhorting the ungodly to hear, renewing His promise of salvation near to come for His people. H. C.

In confirmation of the general threats and promises with which chap. 45 is wound up, the prophet now exhibits the particular case of the Babylonian idols as a single instance chosen from the whole range of past and future history. They are described as fallen and gone into captivity, wholly unable to protect their worshippers or save themselves (verses 1, 2). With these he then contrasts Jehovah's constant care of Israel in time past and in time to come (verses 3, 4). The contrast is carried out by another description of the origin and impotence of idols (verses 5-7), and another assertion of Jehovah's sole divinity, as proved by His knowledge and control of the future, and by the raising up of Cyrus in particular (verses 8-11). This brings him back to the same solemn warning of approaching judgments, and the same alternative of life or death, with which the foregoing chapter closes (verses 12, 13). A.

1. Bel and Nebo were the chief gods of Babylon, named here to represent the whole set. Etymologically, the word Bel comes from Baal, and Nebo from a word which means a prophet or interpreter. H. C.—The dignity of these two imaginary deities among the Babylonians may be learned from the extent to which these names enter into the composition of the names of men, both in sacred and pro-

fane history. Such are Belshazzar, Belteshazzar, Belesys, Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan, Nabopolassar, Nabonned, etc. A.

2. In the ruin of the empire these idol gods bow down, like those wounded or decrepit with age. Their images, once raised aloft for worship, are placed on beasts of burden and carried away in disgrace. The gods stoop, like the beasts that pant under their idols; and "their souls," the divinities themselves, are gone into captivity. *Birks.*

The language of the prophet is necessarily figurative, and when he declares that Bel and Nebo had gone into captivity, nothing more is meant than that the people whose gods they were and whom they represented had passed under the yoke of a foreign conqueror. And yet the prophet's prediction was eventually fulfilled in a very literal way. The empire of Cyrus was broken up after the death of Cambyses, and had to be reconquered by Darius, the son of Hystaspes, the real founder of the Persian empire. Darius was a Zoroastrian monotheist as well as a Persian, and under him and his successors polytheism ceased to be the religion of the State. Twice during his reign he had to besiege Babylon. Hardly had he been proclaimed king when it revolted under a certain Nidinta-Bel, who called himself "Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabonidos." Babylon endured a siege of two years, and was at last captured by Darius only by the help of a stratagem. Six years afterward it again rose in revolt, under an Armenian, who professed, like his predecessor, to be "Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabonidos." Once more, however, it was besieged and taken, and this time the pretender was put to death by impalement. His predecessor, Nidinta-Bel, seems to have been slain while the Persian troops were forcing their way into the captured city. After the second capture of Babylon Darius pulled down its walls; and his son Xerxes completed the work of destruction by destroying the great temple of Bel, and carrying away the golden image of the god. *Sayce.*

3, 4. In beautiful contrast the Lord calls the attention of His people to His own relations to them; not borne by them on their weary beasts who sink under their load, but Himself bearing them on His bosom as the mother bears her babe, and this not merely during helpless infancy, but onward even to old age; and finally at the end of their life-journey delivering them safely into their everlasting rest. Verily such a God meets the heart-felt wants of frail mortals! H. C.

The two ideas of creating and carrying are thrown together, and in such a way as to show that they are related; that in the fact of God the Creator lies enfolded the fact of God the Redeemer. "I have made, and I will bear." Redemption, in one sense, grows out of creation. Because God made man in His own image, He is bent on restoring him to that image. Because God made us God loves us, educates us, bears with us, carries on the race on the line of His infinite patience, ministers to us with help and sympathy, is burdened with our perverseness and blindness, yea, comes down in person into the sphere of our humanity and takes its awful load of sin and sorrow and pain and death upon Himself. He *is* under no obligation imposed by any rightful claim of ours. But He is under an obligation stronger than that—an obligation imposed by the stress of His own infinite love for the children He has created. The stress of obligation does not draw Him from our side, it pushes from Him toward us. It is the mighty outgoing of His own fatherly heart toward that which emanates from Himself and which He yearns to see restored to the image in which He made it. *Vincent.*

5. Where else can such a God as Jehovah be found! With what else can He be even compared? Would you think to compare Him with idol gods? Pause and look at those powerless things. See how they are made. Trace their history from the very outset of their existence. Take the best specimens, those prepared by the wealthy classes, who have money to lavish and who spare it not.

8. Addressing idolaters, the Lord calls upon them to remember these facts in respect to their idol gods and to show themselves men by using the reason God has given them. H. C. —The word *nithshashu*, derived from *'ish*, a man, occurs here only. It answers thus to the apostolic charge, "quit you like men" (1 Cor. 16:13). In one place the reference is to manly understanding, in the other to manly courage. But the two thoughts are very near akin. All superstition and idol worship is mental cowardice, while true faith and right worship are a manly and reasonable thing. *Birks.*

9, 10. "I am the Mighty and there is no other God, and there is none like Me, declaring from the first the last, and from ancient time the things which are not (yet) done (or made), saying, My counsel shall stand and all My pleasure I will do." He calls upon them to consider the proofs of His exclusive deity, afforded not only by the nullity of all conflicting claims, but by the fact of His infallible fore-

knowledge, as attested by the actual prediction of events long before their occurrence. Declaring the last from the first, or the end from the beginning, means declaring the whole series of events included between these extremes. A.

10. "He knows the end from the beginning." In that Eternal Mind lies ever undivided the total idea, the total movement, the total time of the immeasurable universe; "all things stand forever according to His unchanging ordinance;" "He maketh peace in His high places," and yet He hears continually the prayers of His elect. "He putteth their tears in His bottle," "He numbereth the hairs of their heads." Both views belong to the greatness as well as the harmony of the Divine character—great in its condescending depths, as in its ineffable height. God sees all things in their causes, He sees also all things in their effects and as effects, even as they are seen and known by us: He sees them in the infinite, total idea, He sees them also as parts, and in their ever-varied, ever-varying relations; He sees them as ever present, He sees them in their flowing successions; He sees them in their timeless being, before all worlds. He sees them as they are carried out. *T. Lewis.*

Faith and hope, which are prophetic powers in a servant of God, argue from His character and His promises the certainty, the stability of His system. Hence, the visions of faith are sometimes rapturous. But how much more glorious will be the aspect of the system to those who shall be initiated in a future life, into the wondrous counsels of God; who shall see beginning, middle and end; the interruptions, the oppositions, the steps forward, the victory, the closing triumph? God will not seem slow or slack then, but majestic, almighty, all-wise, one and the same through the whole drama. The world will appear to be one, more than now, and the race one, and the counsels of God one from their germ to their perfect fulfilment. Then the perverted will of man, the schemes of imperial power, the theories sanctifying injustice, the great systems of oppression, will seem to have been used by God to spread His glory. As then the enlightened eye shall look back on obstacles, which, at their time, seemed insurmountable, but have now faded away in the distance—on the wrath of man opposing God or defying Him, on revolutions in opinion and in society, they will seem like the storm of yesterday, which has left no trace on the sky, while the steady laws of God run their constant race. "God has triumphed, He has triumphed," they will then say. *Woolsey.*

As God's operations are all according to His counsels, so His counsels shall all be fulfilled in His operations, and none of His measures shall be broken, none of His designs shall miscarry. This yields abundant satisfaction to those who have bound up all their comforts in God's counsels, that His counsel shall undoubtedly stand; and if whatever pleases God pleases us, nothing can contribute more to make us easy than to be assured that "God will do all His pleasure." H.

11. From the general assertion of His providence and power He now passes to that specific proof of it which has so frequently been urged before—viz., the raising up of Cyrus; but without the mention of his name in this case, and with an indefiniteness of expression which is perfectly well suited to the general analogy of prophecy. A.—Cyrus is one of the first who is known to have used the eagle for his military standard. So Xenophon writes of him: "He had for ensign a golden eagle, stretched upon a long spear; and this even still continues to be the ensign of the Persian king." The "man of my purpose" means one set apart by God's decree for a special service. The futurity of the campaigns of Cyrus, when this message was given, can alone make it intelligible. There could be no proof or sign of God's foreknowledge in a record after the event. *Birks.*

12. By an easy and natural association, He subjoins to these proofs of His own divinity, both past and future, a warning to those who were unwilling to receive them. Strength of heart implies, though it does not directly signify, stubbornness or obstinacy and a settled opposition to the will of God.

13. The exhibition of God's righteousness consists in the salvation of His people and the simultaneous destruction of His enemies. To these two classes it was therefore at the same time an object of desire and dread. The stout-hearted mentioned in verse 12 were not prepared for it, and unless they were changed must perish when God's righteousness came near.

Chap. 47. The following seems to be the true analysis. Having exemplified his general doctrine as to God's ability and purpose to do justice both to friends and foes, by exhibiting the downfall of the Babylonian idols, he now attains the same end by predicting the downfall of Babylon itself and of the state to which it gave its name. Under the figure of a royal virgin she is threatened with extreme degradation and exposure (verses 1-3). Connecting this event with Israel and Israel's God, as the

great themes which it was intended to illustrate (verse 4), he predicts the fall of the empire more distinctly (verse 5), and assigns as a reason the oppression of God's people (verse 6), pride and self-confidence (verses 7-9), especially reliance upon human wisdom and upon superstitious arts, all which would prove entirely insufficient to prevent the great catastrophe (verses 10-15). A.

1-3. This picture of the daughter of Babylon going into exile is a true picture of what happened in the reigns of Sargon and Senacherib, while it hardly agrees with anything of which we have knowledge concerning the policy of the Persian monarchs or their treatment of Babylon. W. J. B.

1. These two words are forcibly expressive, "no throne!" no longer any throne for thee; no more regal dominion; no more of the dignity and honor of royal power. The name, "Daughter of the Chaldeans," implies that Babylon was originally built by the Chaldean people. H. C.

In the dust. The dry, arid aspect of the ruins, of the vast mounds which cover the greater buildings, and even the lesser elevations which spread far into the plain at their base, receives continual notice. "The whole surface of the mounds appears to the eye," says Ker Porter, "nothing but vast, irregular hills of earth, mixed with fragments of brick, pottery, vitrifications, mortar, bitumen, etc., while the foot at every step sinks unto the loose dust and rubbish." And again "Every spot of ground in sight was totally barren, and on several tracts appeared the common marks of former building. It is an old adage that 'where a curse has fallen grass will never grow.' In like manner the decomposing materials of a Babylonian structure doom the earth on which they perish to an everlasting sterility." "On all sides," says Sir Austen Layard, "fragments of glass, marble, pottery and inscribed brick are mingled with that peculiar nitrous and blanched soil which, bred from the remains of ancient habitations, checks or destroys vegetation, and renders the site of Babylon a naked and hideous waste." G. R.

2. Her debasement is compared to the change from being a queen to being an abject slave. "Take the mill-stones"—i.e., of the small hand-mill—a necessity in every Oriental family, with which the grinding for each day's use was done every morning, and always done by the lowest class of servants. H. C.

3. The daughter of Babylon, this royal damsel, must suffer both abasement and captivity.

She must pass through deep waters, and her pride be replaced by a painful and repulsive exposure, both of her political weakness and her moral shame and guilt. *Birks.*

4. The apparent abruptness between this verse and the preceding is relieved when we consider that retributive judgment on Babylon was mercy and salvation to Zion. It was for the sake of saving Zion and of punishing Babylon for her cruel oppression of God's people that these terrible judgments came upon her. Hence the thought here. Utter destruction upon Babylon is only what might be expected, for our Redeemer is the Lord of hosts, King of the armies of heaven, bearing this name because He is such in fact and therefore clothed with all power to avenge His people on their oppressors.

6. The Lord never fails to hold nations responsible for such violations of natural right and of the impulses of common humanity. (See Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13, etc.) To this eternal law, written on all hearts, even the most ignorant heathen are held amenable (Rom. 2:14, 15). H. C.

7-15. Babylon, now doomed to ruin, is here justly upbraided with her pride, luxury and security, in the day of her prosperity, and the confidence she had in her own wisdom and forecast, and particularly in the prognostications

and counsels of the astrologers. These things are mentioned both to justify God in bringing these judgments upon her and to mortify her and put her to so much the greater shame under these judgments; for when God comes forth to take vengeance glory belongs to Him, but confusion to the sinner. H.

13. These words describe the habitual state and character of Babylon before her calamity. She has abounded in wise men, diviners, interpreters of dreams, observers of the heavens, and has consulted them even to satiety. *Birks.*

14, 15. Here is the result. Instead of affording to Babylon the least help, these magicians are themselves awfully consumed. They are as stubble; fire devours them. They cannot even save themselves, much less the nation and the people. Such is the doom of those with whom thou hast wrought even to weariness to find help from them for thyself. The fire of God's judgments has utterly consumed them. "Thy merchants from thy youth" (*i.e.*, who have been with thee from thy youth) "have scattered, every one going his way, and no one saves thee." The magicians destroyed by fire (this is the figure) and the merchants (her wealthy classes probably) dispersed in every direction to other homes and other openings for trade and wealth, she is left with none to help her. H. C.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XLVIII.

48: 1 HEAR ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah ; which swear by the name of the LORD, and make
 2 mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel ; the LORD of hosts is his name.
 3 I have declared the former things from of old ; yea, they went forth out of my mouth, and I
 4 shewed them : suddenly I did them, and they came to pass. Because I knew that thou art
 5 obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass ; therefore I have declared it to thee from of old ; before it came to pass I shewed it thee : lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol
 6 hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them. Thou hast heard it ; behold all this ; and ye, will ye not declare it ? I have shewed thee new things
 7 from this time, even hidden things, which thou hast not known. They are created now, and not from of old ; and before this day thou heardest them not ; lest thou shouldest say,
 8 Behold, I knew them. Yea, thou heardest not ; yea, thou knewest not ; yea, from of old thine ear was not opened : for I knew that thou didst deal very treacherously, and wast called
 9 a transgressor from the womb. For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my
 10 praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. Behold, I have refined thee, but not as silver ; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. For mine own sake, for mine own sake,
 will I do it ; for how should *my name* be profaned ? and my glory will I not give to another.
 12 Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel my called : I am he ; I am the first, I also am the
 13 last. Yea, mine hand hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spread
 14 out the heavens : when I call unto them, they stand up together. Assemble yourselves, all ye, and hear ; which among them hath declared these things ? The LORD hath loved him : he
 15 shall perform his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm *shall be on the Chaldeans*. I, even I, have spoken ; yea, I have called him : I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.
 16 Come ye near unto me, hear ye this ; from the beginning I have not spoken in secret ; from
 17 the time that it was, there am I : and now the Lord GOD hath sent me, and his spirit. Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel : I am the LORD thy God, which teach-
 18 eth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments ! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness
 19 as the waves of the sea : thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the grains thereof : his name should not be cut off nor destroyed from before me.
 20 Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans ; with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth : say ye, The LORD hath redeemed his servant
 21 Jacob. And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts : he caused the waters
 22 to flow out of the rock for them : he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out. There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.

Chap. 48. The first cycle of the later prophecies, after announcing the victories of Cyrus and the fall of Babylon, closes in this chapter with a fresh voice of rebuke and encouragement to Israel. The wisdom of God, revealed in the fulfilment of the "former things," was to prepare them for "new things," or those times of Messiah, of which fuller predictions are now to follow. The chapter has two equal divisions, each opening with a call to listen to the voice of God. The first is mainly rebuke, the second encouragement. The former, again, applies chiefly to the times from Isaiah till the Return, and the latter from the Return to the

coming of Messiah ; while the whole makes a transition from the days of the prophecy to the times of the New Testament. *Birks.*

From his digression with respect to the causes and effects of the catastrophe of Babylon, the prophet now returns to his more general themes, and winds up the first great division (chaps. 40-48) of the later prophecies by a reiteration of the same truths and arguments which run through the previous portion of it, with some variations and additions. Although Israel is God's chosen and peculiar people, he is in himself unworthy of the honor and unfaithful to the trust (verses 1, 2). Former pre-

dictions had been uttered expressly to prevent his ascribing the event to other gods (verses 3-5). For the same reason new predictions will be uttered now of events which have never been distinctly foretold (verses 6-8). God's continued favor to His people has no reference to merit upon their part, but is the fruit of His own sovereign mercy and intended to promote His own designs (verses 9-11). He again asserts His own exclusive deity, as proved by the creation of the world, by the prediction of events still future, and especially by the raising up of Cyrus, as a promised instrument to execute His purpose (verses 12-16). The sufferings of Israel are the fruit of his own sin, his prosperity and glory of God's sovereign grace (verses 17-19). The first part closes as it opened with a promise of deliverance from exile, accompanied, in this case, by a solemn limitation of the promise to its proper objects (verses 20-22).

It is evident that these are the same elements which enter into all the later prophecies thus far, and that these elements are here combined in very much the usual proportions, although not in precisely the same shape and order. The most novel feature of this chapter is the fulness with which one principal design of prophecy and the connection between Israel's sufferings and his sins, are stated. A.

The moral aim of the chapter is obvious. Its bearings are naturally wholesome. In Isaiah's time and onward to the coming of Christ there was painful occasion for such an expose of the imperfect piety of God's professed people. It was needful in order to put their sins distinctly before their own eyes; to impress them with the fact that God saw those sins and estimated their guilt perfectly; to induce repentance; to keep them humble; to prevent their being elated with their distinguished honor as God's chosen people; to make them feel that this distinction was not due to their merit, but to the fact that God had purposes of glorious mercy for our race and chose them as His instruments in His sovereignty for His higher ends and not at all because of their good deserts. Remarkably the points brought forward and made to bear upon the chosen people, contemplated thus as very defective in their piety, are to a great extent the same which have been most prominent in the previous chapters—*e.g.*, the existence, perfections and creatorship of God; His foreknowledge as evinced repeatedly in prophecy; His wonderful providence in raising up Cyrus, and His great mercies toward His people.

1. This verse strikes the key-note of the

chapter in respect to the point of view in which God's people are contemplated. They are insincere and untruthful in their religious professions. H. C.—When Isaiah wrote these later visions, the ten tribes had been wholly carried away. These men of Judah made mention of God's name in vows, oaths, prayers and sacrifices, but not in truth or righteousness, for their services were heartless and insincere. Birks.

3. In chaps. 40-48 we find the greatest emphasis laid upon the circumstances that the deliverance of Israel from the Babylonian captivity had been long predicted by prophecy, and that the prophet foretells the appearance of Cyrus before it takes place. These chapters maintain also that the prediction of such particular events is a proof that the God of Israel is the true God, while on the other hand they assert that the vanity of the heathen gods is manifested by their inability to foretell anything. When it is said (42:9), "New things do I declare; *before they spring forth* I tell you of them," the idea of pure prediction could hardly be more precisely expressed. The unbelief of the people is here represented as without excuse, for the very reason that the predictions of the prophets were authenticated by their fulfilment. Oehler.

4, 5. The special reasons assigned here for the mission of the prophets and for the messages they bore reveal a degree of apostasy that is startling. Because the people were morally hardened so that their neck was an iron sinew (stiff-necked), and their brow unyielding as brass; and lest, if God had not predicted the events beforehand, they would have attributed them to their idol gods. H. C.

"Thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass" is the language which God uses to set forth the tremendous strength and determined obduracy of the soul's protracted resistance against Him. In the compass of the Scriptures and of human thought no metaphors stronger or more striking can be found—the neck one consolidated iron sinew, which will not yield to any force, the brow brass, impenetrable to any weapon. By these bold figures God exhibits the utter hardness and unsubmissiveness of the long disobedient heart, its utter invulnerableness to the sword of His own Spirit. And we only need look at the number and the might of the influences exerted by God Himself, which the long-resisting spirit actually withstands, to see that these figures are not in the least overdrawn. Begirt with all the motives which time and eternity, heaven, earth and hell can

bind around him—motives that combine the urgency of all the goodness, the mercies and the judgments of God, that reach into eternity and compass all the joys of the redeemed and all the woes of the doomed, and added to these the power of conscience and the strivings of the Holy Ghost, the hardened sinner, with neck of iron and brazen brow, defiantly withstands all; nay, in the strength of a will long practiced and indurated in evil doing boldly grapples with and breaks them all asunder! B.

6, 7. These prophecies are brought out now and not of old, yet before thou hadst heard anything of these events, lest if it had been otherwise, thou wouldest have said, I knew that myself. God must needs make the evidence of His prescience in prophecy and of His hand in fulfilling it very conclusive, even resistless, or those hardened and idol-worshipping men will deny Him the honor of it and claim it for their gods, or insist that their own sagacity had already seen it. A dark view, indeed, of their perverseness and moral blindness!

8. The Lord knew they would only pervert and abuse the light He should give them, and therefore He gave them light only in small amount. Hence these hardened, perverse men received far less light from prophecy than they otherwise would, because the Lord knew they would not make a good use of it. H. C.

9-11. The deliverance of God's people out of their captivity in Babylon was a thing upon many accounts so improbable that there was need of line upon line for the encouragement of the faith and hope of God's people concerning it. Two things were discouraging to them: their own unworthiness that God should do it for them and the many difficulties in the thing itself; now, in these verses, both these discouragements are removed, for here is a reason why God would do it for them, though they were unworthy; not for their sake, be it known to them, but "for His name's sake, for His own sake."

10. Though He does not find them meet for His favor, He will make them so. And this accounts for His bringing them into the trouble, and continuing them in it so long as He did; it was not to cut them off, but to do them good; it was to refine them, but not as silver, not so thoroughly as men refine their silver, which they continue in the furnace till all the dross is separated from it; if God should take that course with them, they would be always in the furnace, for they are all dross, and as such might justly be put away as reprobate silver

(Jer. 6:30). He therefore takes them as they are, refined in part only, and not thoroughly. "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction, I have made thee a choice one by the good which the affliction has done thee, and then designed thee for great things." Many have been brought home to God as chosen vessels and a good work of grace been begun in them in the furnace of affliction. Affliction is no bar to God's choice, but subservient to His purpose. H.

A strain of theocratic sovereignty runs through all the teachings of the book on the origin of sorrow. Sorrow never happens; it is inflicted. It never springs up in a night; it is foreordained. God cared enough for the sufferer to think of him, to individualize him from the uncounted millions of the universe, to plan the outline of his destiny and to select and arrange his appointed discipline; and this long before he was born. Every one of us is enclosed in a golden network of eternal and benignant decrees. *Phelps.*

The scope of God in the afflictions of His people is not their hurt, but good; it is not to destroy them for their sin, but to destroy sin in them; it is not to withdraw Himself from them, but to draw them nearer to Himself. All the hurt that the Lord intends us by any affliction is but to get out our dross—to bring us from those things that will undo and ruin us forever. And how great an argument of the goodness of God is it that He designeth the evils which we suffer in these dying bodies to heal the evils and help on the good of our immortal souls! That's all the hurt that the Lord means us. And the Lord's heart is so much in this design (the return of those He afflicts from their iniquity) that He seems confident of it that when they are in affliction surely they will return. Take heed you be not found disappointing Him of His purpose. *Caryl.*

Neither our toils nor our tribulations enter into the price of our redemption; but they are essential elements in our growth in Christian character. For the present they do not "seem to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." God's end in all that He lays upon us is "our profit that we may be partakers of His holiness." To many God's afflictive providences are stumbling-blocks. Why does He afflict? Why demand self denial and cross-bearing of all? Why lay the rod of chastisement upon His best-loved ones? Why press

the cup of bitterness persistently to the lips of His dearest ones? The answer is given in the figure of the fine gold which has been purified in fire. "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction" is God's own explanation of the life history of many of His most eminent disciples. *W. E. Moore.*

The unaccountable severities of human experience—the woes of broken health and grim depression; the agonies by which human bodies or human hearts are wrenched for whole years; the wrongs of orphanage or feebleness; pestilence, fire, flood, tempest and famine—how can a good God launch His bolts on men, we ask, in severities like these? And the sufferers themselves sometimes wonder, even in their faith, how it is that if God is a Father, He can let fall on His children such hail storms of inevitable, unmitigated disaster. No, suffering mortal! a truce to all such complainings. These are only God's merciful indications, fomentations of trouble and sorrow that He is applying, to soften the rugged and hard will in you. These pains are only switches to turn you off from the track of His coming retributions. If your great, proud nature could be won to the real greatness of character by a tenderer treatment, do you not see, from all God's gentle methods of dealing with mankind, that He would gladly soften your troubles? And if diamonds are not polished by soap or oil, or even by any other stone, but only by their own fine dust, why should you complain that God is tempering you to your good only by such throes and lacerations and wastings of life as are necessary? *Bushnell.*

Grace in the saints is often as fire hid in the embers, affliction is the bellows to blow it up into a flame. The Lord makes the house of bondage a friend to our grace; now faith and patience act their part; the darkness of the night cannot hinder the brightness of a star; so the more the diamond is cut, the more it sparkles; and the more God afflicts us, the more our graces cast a sparkling lustre. *Watson.*

Every child of God is led, instructed by the Spirit; and is also corrected, "the sufferings of this present world" thus prepare for "the glory which shall be revealed in us." That is a very spiritual prayer, "Take me, break me, make me." Sometimes God cannot make us until He first breaks us. I saw a golden cup made of old gold coins; they had lost the original image and superscription, and had been put into the melting pot and wrought into a new and beautiful vessel. Sometimes God takes sinners from whom His image and super-

scription have been worn off in a world of sin; He takes them and breaks them in pieces and melts them and then makes out of them a vessel unto honor. Peter speaks of the "trial of faith," "much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire," "that it might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." A goldsmith makes a chalice for a king's table. He first refines the metal till all the dross is out of it, and then he stamps it approved; that is praise; then he moulds it for the noble ends to which it is destined; that is honor; then he takes the graving tool and polishing instrument, covers it with ornamental inscriptions and devices, and sets it round with gems until it flashes back the many colors of the rainbow; that is glory. So the Lord puts you into His crucible, refines away your dross, and marks you with His approval; that is praise or approbation. Then He shapes you into a vessel for holy uses; that is honor. Then He grinds you on the wheel of affliction, and finishes you with His polishing instrument until you reflect the glorious likeness of His dear son, and that is glory. *Pierson.*

As to the effects of sorrow upon human character there can be no ground for dispute or question. Some natures are elevated, purified and ennobled by sorrow; others are shrivelled, warped and embittered. In some, sorrow arouses and deepens the sympathies, broadens the charity and softens and purifies the whole nature. All the graces of the spirit seem to take deep and abiding root in the heart thus softened, and as some of the most wonderful and beautiful flowers burst into full bloom only in the night, so do these graces bloom and disperse their fragrance in the darkness of affliction; convincing us that, as in the case of night-blooming plants, some wonderful Divine impulse is behind these manifestations, the result of some secret communication of the Divine power and life. On the other hand it is equally apparent that "the sorrow of this world worketh death." All those sorrows that come from the disappointment of worldly ambitions, from inability or unwillingness to exercise self-denial or to submit patiently to the inevitable crosses of life, from failure to curb the temper and the tongue, from envy and strife and self-seeking, from crushed vanity and unattainable worldly desires, all these constitute the sorrow of the world. It finds no alleviation in anything that the Gospel has to offer; it knows nothing of the comfort that the resigned and submissive heart receives from the Divine Comforter. It

has none of the supporting, inspiring, strengthening elements that the Christian heart alone can know. And so we see that sorrow, according as it is received, is either "a saviour of life unto life, or of death unto death." *Interior.*

11. The terms are comprehensive and contain a statement of the general doctrine, as the sum of the whole argument, that what Jehovah does for His own people is in truth done not for any merit upon their part, but to protect His own Divine honor. A.

12. His regard for the glory of His name moved Him to appeal yet again to their moral sense. Let My people, called mercifully to be My own, listen to My voice, declaring that I am God alone. This fact bore directly and powerfully against their propensity to idols. It was also an impressive fact, apart from its relations to idol worship. No truths are more vital to piety than the existence and perfections of the one glorious God.

13. The last clause reads literally, "I am calling them; they stand up together." Hence it should naturally refer, not to the original creation of the heavenly bodies, but to God's present control over them. They obey His orders as His willing servants. He calls; they stand forth promptly to do His bidding. God's agency is no less active and essential in sustaining every star and planet in its sphere than in their original creation. H. C.

Some scientists say that the evolution of worlds by merely natural forces and laws is a matter of established science; that inasmuch as the nebular hypothesis will fully account for everything we find in the heavens without calling in the aid of the supernatural, it is unphilosophical and unreasonable to go outside of nature for its explanation. The testimony of Sir John Herschel, by far the most accomplished of English astronomers since Newton, to the insufficiency of the nebular hypothesis to account for the heavenly bodies, has been greatly strengthened by more recent researches. In fact, the hypothesis, so far as it proposes to explain the heavens without a Deity, has become so burdened with difficulties and insuperables that it no longer deserves serious consideration. On the other hand, the only competing cosmogony, the theistic, while perfectly sufficient and, *a priori*, at least as credible as any, is greatly the simplest, the surest, the safest, the sublimest, the most salutary and the most in accordance with the convictions and traditions of mankind, especially of the most enlightened and moral part of mankind. In each of these respects it has almost infinitely the advantage over its

competitor; and according to the maxims and practice of philosophy in other things, such an aggregate superiority as this ought to cause theism to be promptly accepted and fully rested on as the true explanation of nature. *Burr.*

15. The word "I," thrice repeated, makes God's agency in calling forth Cyrus trebly emphatic. The Lord first called him by name; then brought him forth in His providence, and gave him complete success.

16. Christ appears here as the author and fountain of prophecy; "I have not spoken in secret from the beginning." Also as the God of universal providence; "from the time that it was, there am I"—*i.e.*, from the time that these prophecies respecting the restoration by means of Cyrus began to be fulfilled, I was there, actively energizing in providence to fulfil My purposes. Now I have a special mission to My people. "The Lord God hath sent me with His Spirit"—filling Me with the Spirit, and thus anointing and endowing Me for My work. That the Son of God, the promised Messiah, is the author and fountain of prophecy, inspiring and directing the prophets of the ancient dispensation, follows naturally from the New Testament doctrine that He is "head over all things to the Church" (Eph. 1:22). Being the Divine regent who rules this world for the interests of His spiritual kingdom, He must of course supervise and control all His servants employed in this kingdom of light and truth. He commissioned the prophets of the Old Testament no less distinctly than the apostles of the New. They were not only prophets *of* Christ, but prophets speaking *for* Christ—inspired and sent by Him. Furthermore, that Jesus Christ is the God of universal providence is also taught plainly and abundantly in the New Testament. It is most wise and safe to adopt the construction which is most obvious, natural and easy, provided also that the sense which it brings out is true, and yet more especially, if it be a leading truth, fully taught and made prominent in the Scriptures. All these conditions are met in the construction above, and therefore give it the preference greatly over any and all others. H. C.—The Spirit of God is here spoken of as a person distinct from the Father and the Son, and having a Divine authority to send prophets. Whom God sends, the Spirit sends. Those whom God commissions for any service, the Spirit in some measure qualifies for it; and those may speak boldly and must be heard obediently whom God and His Spirit send. As that which the

prophet says to the same purport with this (chap. 61 : 1) is applied to Christ (Luke 4 : 21), so may this be ; the Lord God sent Him, and He had the Spirit without measure. H.

17-19. After severe rebuke there is here a wonderful utterance of Divine compassion toward rebellious Israel. It finds its echo in those later words of the same Divine Person, tabernacling in mortal flesh, "O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace" (Luke 19 : 42). The Son of God, in every age, is the Redeemer, Teacher, Guide and Shepherd of Israel. *Birks.*

17. God by the prophet sends them a gracious message for their support and comfort under their affliction. The preface to this message is both awful and encouraging. "Thus saith Jehovah," the eternal God, thy Redeemer, that has often been so, that has engaged to be so, and will be faithful to the engagement, for He is "the Holy One," that cannot deceive, "the Holy One of Israel," that will not deceive them. The same words that introduce the law and give authority to that introduce the promise and give validity to that—"I am the Lord thy God," whom thou mayest depend upon as in relation to thee and in covenant with thee. "I am thy God that teaches thee to profit," teaches thee such things as are profitable for thee, things that belong to thy peace. By this God shows Himself to be a God in covenant with us, by His teaching us (Heb. 8 : 10, 11), and none teaches like Him, for He gives an understanding. Whom God redeems, He teaches ; whom He designs to deliver out of their afflictions, He first teaches to profit by their afflictions, makes them partakers of His holiness ; for that is the "profit for which He chastens us" (Heb. 12 : 10). He leads them to the way and in the way by which they should go ; He not only enlightens their eyes, but directs their steps ; by His grace He leads them in the way of duty, by His providence He leads them in the way of deliverance. Happy they that are under such a guidance ! H.

We are not governed as the stars. God desires and seeks our joyful acquiescence. We are made willing in the day of His power, but it is without violating our personal freedom. The discipline may be stern through which the providence and grace of God brings us into harmony with Himself, but when the conflict is over it ends forever, and we will bless the hand that wrought out the work in us. *T. A. Nelson.*

My life is not what I would have chosen. I

often long for quiet, for reading and for thought. It seems to me to be a very paradise to be able to read, to think, go deep into things, gather the glorious riches of intellectual culture. God has forbidden it in His providence. I must spend hours in receiving people who wish to speak to me about all manner of trifles ; must reply to letters about nothing ; must engage in public work on everything ; employ my life on what seems uncongenial, vanishing, temporary, waste. Yet God knows me better than I know myself. He knows my gifts, my powers, my failings and my weaknesses ; what I can do and what not do. So I desire to be led, and not to lead ; to follow Him. And I am quite sure that He has thus enabled me to do a great deal more in ways which seemed to me almost a waste of life, in advancing His kingdom than I would have done any other way. I am sure of that. *Norman McLeod.*

Believe me, I speak it deliberately and with full conviction ; I have enjoyed many of the comforts of life, none of which I wish to esteem lightly ; often have I been charmed with the beauties of nature, and refreshed with her bountiful gifts. I have spent many an hour in sweet meditation and in reading the most valuable productions of the wisest men. I have often been delighted with the conversation of ingenious, sensible and exalted characters ; my eyes have been powerfully attracted by the finest productions of human art, and my ears by enchanting melodies. I have found pleasure when calling into activity the powers of my own mind ; when residing in my own native land or travelling through foreign parts ; when surrounded by large and splendid companies—still more when moving in the small endearing circle of my own family ; yet, to speak the truth before God, who is my Judge, I must confess I know not any joy that is so dear to me, that so fully satisfies the inmost desires of my mind, that so enlivens, refines and elevates my whole nature, as that which I derive from religion, from faith in God ; as one who not only is the parent of men, but has condescended, as a brother, to clothe Himself with our nature. Nothing affords me greater delight than a solid hope that I partake of His favors and rely on His never-failing support and protection. He who has been so often my hope, my refuge, my confidence, when I stood upon the brink of an abyss where I could not move one step forward ; He who, in answer to my prayer, has helped me when every prospect of help vanished ; that God who has safely conducted me, not merely through flowery paths,

but likewise across precipices and burning sands—may this God be thy God, thy comfort, as He has been mine ! *Lavater.*

18. God had taught them well, pointing out the way of life and blessedness ! Oh, had they only hearkened and obeyed ! The language expresses the strongest desire for this, and most clearly implies God's care and love for His people. If Israel had honestly obeyed, then had her peace, in the sense of prosperity and happiness, been as a river. H. C.—The ideas suggested by the figure of a river are abundance, perpetuity and freshness, to which the waves of the sea add those of vastness, depth and continual succession. A.

Oh, that thou hadst. These words would be sad from the lips of man, but coming from God they are inexpressibly touching and solemn. They are the cry of a wounded heart. They tell not of the wrath of justice, but of the sorrows of love. There is indeed mystery, as there must be, whenever we have to do with the Infinite ; but that very mystery makes the complaint all the more affecting and impressive. "Oh, that thou hadst !" *Anon.*—There is to each of us an ideal life that is a bright, pure, perfect course along which we might go from earth into heaven. And this ideal life is *the* life ; the others that come in place of it are usurpers and pretenders. This expression shows that it is no matter of indifference with God how men live. It shows that God feels this matter to pain and intensity, to sorrow and regret, to yearning love and great longing. *Raleigh.*

Peace as a river. There shall be a tide of peace, a wide and deep stream of it, passing into his soul. It shall pervade his soul, reaching every faculty and thought and feeling in it. His understanding, his affections, his will, his whole mind, shall be at rest, and in the end perfectly at rest. The waters shall be deep as well as broad. Thus this prophet speaks elsewhere of the "perfect peace" of the believer ; and David, of his "great peace." "The peace of God," we read, "passeth all understanding." It not only exceeds our comprehension in its nature, we can set no bounds to its extent. There is an abundance of peace for us, for there is God's own peace for us, that which reigns over and keeps tranquil His own mighty mind. *C. Bradley.*

Bodily repose, however sweet and salutary, is but the feeble type of that truer "rest which remaineth for the people of God," a rest sweeter than sleep, deeper than death, and more pure in its unselfish calmness than the heaven which

sentiment or poetry has pictured. When doubt and disbelief are gone, when the object of life is found in Christ, when God becomes the sure portion and sweetest joy of the heart and the spirit within us, hitherto, it may be, groping bewildered amid earthly hopes and pleasures, like one in the dark for the friendly hand, feels itself at last embraced in the sure grasp of strong and changeless love—then is the true rest of man, the stillness of the weary spirit in the everlasting arms. It is not the occasional refreshment, but the ever-flowing current of the inner life : "Thy peace shall be as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." Even amid the outer toil and distraction of the world, it is "the peace of God which keepeth the heart and mind." Nor does death, which disunites and disturbs all else, for a moment interrupt its continuity ; for the rest of the soul in Christ is identical with the rest of heaven—"the rest which remaineth for the people of God." *Caird.*

20. The message closes with a direct command to the exiles of Israel to set out joyfully on their way to Zion. This exhortation puts the keystone on all the previous promises of deliverance. And here too the visions enter on a new stage. Cyrus, Babylon and the Chaldeans are never mentioned again. The message travels onward to the times of Messiah. The former things are seen, in spirit, as fulfilled ; and the new things begin their course, all centring in the person and work of the promised Immanuel, the Messiah of God.

21, 22. The returning exiles, while they celebrate their recent redemption, are to call to mind the wonders wrought for their fathers in the days of old. The whole series of mercies, from the Exodus onward, are thus summed up in one song of triumphant praise. The God of Israel was the same through every age, the unfailing Friend and Deliverer of His people. His earlier mercies might be varied in their form, but their substance would be the same in every successive age. He opens evermore "streams in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." But these blessings belong to the faithful alone. The wicked are like the troubled sea, restless and devoid of peace, a gift which belongs only to the true Israel of God. *Birks.*

22. This verse was intended to restrict the operation of the foregoing promises to true believers, or the genuine Israel ; as if He had said, All this will God accomplish for His people, but not for the wicked among them. The grand conclusion to which all tends is, that God is all and man nothing ; that even the

chosen people must be sufferers, because they are sinners ; that peculiar favor confers no immunity to sin or exemption from responsibility, but that even in the Israel of God and the enjoyment of the most extraordinary privileges, it still remains forever true that "there is no peace to the wicked." A.—God will do good both surely and abundantly to all those who humbly and obediently seek Him ; but *there shall be no peace to the wicked* forevermore ! How desolate to have *no peace, at all, forever !* H. C.

The wicked, as a matter of sober truth and verity, *have* no permanent and substantial peace and joy. They have none in the *act* of wickedness. Sin produces no permanent joy. It may be attended with gratification of bad passions, but in the act of sinning, as such, there can be no substantial happiness. They have no solid, substantial, elevated peace in the business or the pleasures of life. This world can furnish no such joys as are derived from communion with God, and the hope of a life to come. Pleasures "pall upon the sense," riches take wings ; disappointment meets them in the way ; and the highest earthly and sensual pleasure leaves a sad sense of want—a feeling that there is *something* in the capacities and wants of the undying mind which has not been met and filled. They have no peace of conscience ; no deep and abiding conviction that they are right. They are often troubled in their conscience ; and there is nothing which this world can furnish which will give peace to a bosom that is agitated with a sense of the guilt of sin. They have no *peace* on a death-bed. There may be stupidity, callousness, insensibility, freedom from much pain or alarm. But that is not peace any more than sterility is fruitfulness, or than death is life, or than the frost of winter is the verdure of spring. And there is often in these circumstances the reverse of peace. There is not only no positive peace, but there is the opposite. There is often disappointment, care, anxiety, distress, an awakened conscience, deep alarm and the awful apprehension of eternal wrath. There is no situation in life or death where the sinner can certainly *calculate* on peace, or where he will be sure to find it. There is every probability that his mind will be often filled with alarm, and that his death-bed will be one of despair. And there is no peace to the wicked beyond the grave. *A sinner CAN have no peace at the judgment bar of God ; he CAN have no peace in hell.* In all the future world there is no place where he can find repose ; and whatever this life may be, even if it be a life of prosperity and external

comfort, yet to him there will be no prosperity in the future world, and no external or internal peace there. *Barnes.*

To do wrong is the surest way to bring suffering ; no wrong deed ever failed to bring it. Those sins which are followed by no palpable pain are yet terribly avenged, even in this life. They abridge our capacity of happiness, impair our relish for innocent pleasure and increase our sensibility to suffering. They spoil us of the armor of a pure conscience and of trust in God, without which we are naked amid hosts of foes, and are vulnerable by all the changes of life. Thus, to do wrong is to inflict the surest injury on our *own* peace. No enemy can do us equal harm with what we do ourselves whenever and however we violate any moral or religious obligation. *Channing.*—The soul in its deepest degradation will still cry for its God. It will not, it cannot, be at rest without Him. Man was made for happiness, holiness, God ; not for misery, sin, self. *Reid.*

The sentence which Christ passes upon them that *will not* come to Him is simply, "Depart from Me." If men will not labor to enter into rest, there is no alternative before them but perpetual *unrest*, lasting as long as they last ; and this is itself "the fire prepared for the devil and his angels," for this is the natural state of evil spirits apart from artificial and temporary disguises. *R. Winterbotham.*

Punishment is not the effect of the mere arbitrary will and appointment of God, but arises from the very nature of law. If there be a law, there must be penalties attached to it. And hence it is that the justice and truth of God are concerned in putting these penalties into execution. God is just, and His justice requires that He should render to every man according to his works. God is true, and His truth requires that His threatenings as well as His promises should be fulfilled. God being the moral Ruler and Governor of His intelligent creatures, the punishment due to the transgression of His law is the necessary effect of the Divine righteousness, justice and truth. *P. J. Gloag.*

If you deny the truth as a dogma, you cannot deny the existing facts. Virtue, piety and benevolence constitute heaven, here. Vice, blasphemy and malevolence constitute hell, here. Physical and sanitary cleanliness are necessary to physical life and comfort. Moral and spiritual cleanliness are necessary to the highest pleasure. The one stairway leads down to the sewers—the other leads up to the stars. There is no escaping these truths, and there is

no avoiding the two conditions to which they point in the future, if there be any future. There is no way of escaping these truths but by making man a mere animal—and not many are willing to confess that they are mere animals. We are not content to wait for heaven till after death when we may enjoy it largely now. We do not need to go to Dante for descriptions of the goal of sin when we can see it in the slums. There is the pure mother amid her little ones trying to lead them in the way of that wisdom which is pleasantness and whose paths are peace. That is heaven. There is that painted creature on the street, brass in her eyes, alcohol on her breath, blasphemy and moral putridity on her lips, a magazine of foul spiritual and physical infection. That is hell. If you reject the doctrine, what do you propose to do with the fact? *Interior.*

This first series or cycle of the later prophecies has a marked internal unity and a striking termination. It begins by taking up the charge, which closes the earlier prophecies, and giving a message of comfort to the fearful-hearted; a promise of strength to the weak hands and the failing knees, in the prospect of that captivity which the prophet has announced to Hezekiah in the hour of his vainglorious display to the envoys from Babylon. It announces, in its opening, three great mercies to Israel; a victory in its hard and long warfare with heathen idolatry, forgiveness of iniquity through the great sin-offering, on whom the Lord would lay the iniquity of His people; and a double recompense of blessing at last, after ages of conflict and sorrow. The first of these promises has been unfolded in the present series. *Birks.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTER XLIX.

- 49 : 1** LISTEN, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye peoples, from far: the LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name: and he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me; and he hath made me a polished shaft, in his quiver hath he kept me close: and he said unto me, Thou art my servant; Israel, in whom I will be glorified. But I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and vanity: yet surely my judgement is with the LORD, and my recompence with my God. And now saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, and that Israel be gathered unto him: (for I am honourable in the eyes of the LORD, and my God is become my strength:)
- 6** yea, he saith, It is too light a thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. Thus saith the LORD, the redeemer of Israel, *and* his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers: Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall worship; because of the LORD that is faithful, *even* the Holy One of Israel, who hath chosen thee.
- 8** Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I answered thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to raise up the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages; saying to them that are bound, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and on all bare heights shall be their pasture. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them; for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my high ways shall be exalted. Lo, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim. Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have compassion upon his afflicted.
- 14, 15** But Zion said, Jehovah hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her

- 16 womb? yea, these may forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon
 17 the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. Thy children make haste;
 18 thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee. Lift up thine eyes
 round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live,
 saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all as with an ornament, and gird
 19 thyself with them, like a bride. For, as for thy waste and thy desolate places and thy land
 that hath been destroyed, surely now shalt thou be too strait for the inhabitants, and they
 20 that swallowed thee up shall be far away. The children of thy bereavement shall yet say
 21 in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt
 thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have been bereaved of my
 children, and am solitary, an exile, and wandering to and fro? and who hath brought up
 these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where were they?
- 22 Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will lift up mine hand to the nations, and set up my
 ensign to the peoples: and they shall bring thy sons in their bosom, and thy daughters shall
 23 be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens
 thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their faces to the earth, and lick the
 dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD, and they that wait for me shall
 24 not be ashamed. Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captives be deliv-
 25 ered? But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and
 the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with
 26 thee, and I will save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own
 flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh
 shall know that I the LORD am thy saviour, and thy redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

Chap. 49. This chapter, like the whole second part which it introduces (chaps. 49-58), has for its great theme the relation of the Church to the world, or of Israel to the Gentiles. The relation of the former to Jehovah is of course still kept in view, but with less exclusive prominence than in the first part (chaps. 40-48). The doctrine there established and illustrated, as to the mutual relation of the body and the head, is here assumed as the basis of more explicit teachings with respect to their joint relation to the world and the great design of their vocation. There is not so much a change of topics as a change in their relative position and proportions. A.

Chap. 49 is a direct address of Messiah, first to the isles of the Gentiles, and then afterward to Zion, announcing His own incarnation and ministry, when He would come as the Lord God, in great humility, to be the Shepherd of Israel, to gather His people and bring them back, after their wanderings, to His fold. Here the controversy (chap. 41) of God, the Righteous Governor of nations, with stubborn heathen idolatry, passes into a gracious invitation to all the isles of the Gentiles, to obey the voice and accept the mercy of the incarnate and glorified Son of God. This is followed by an intimation that Zion, after seeming to be long forgotten, would receive at length, through the coming Messiah, a joyful deliverance. *Birks.*

1. All nations are invited to give attention

"from afar" to what the Messiah is about to say of His wonderful mission. "The Lord hath called Me from the womb," giving His name "*Jesus*," "Son of God" even before His birth (see Matt. 1:20, 21 and Luke 1:35), thus precisely fulfilling this prediction even in its most specific sense. H. C.

2. By *mouth* we are of course to understand speech, discourse. The comparison is repeated and explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews (4:12): "The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." In both cases these qualities are predicated not of literal speech merely, but of the instruction of which it is the natural and common instrument. A.—It is pertinent that the power of Jesus' words should be made prominent here because they were so in His history, it being testified of Him, "Never man spake like this man." He Himself accounts His kingdom to be essentially the reign of truth. He explains His work as King, saying, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth" (John 18:37). Giving like prominence to His functions as a Teacher of truth, He is called "the Word" (John 1:1).

3. **Israel.** All that precedes and all that follows direct our minds so manifestly and

forcibly to Jesus the Messiah, that all other interpretations of this term except that which applies it to Him must be rejected. As reasons for applying this term to Christ, it may be said, He was of the seed of Israel in His human relations, and the context looks specially to His earthly life and to His human relations to His own national people. Again, He fulfilled in Himself the etymological significance of the name Israel—a prince having power with God. He was pre-eminently *an Israel*—one whom God “always heard”—one “who ever liveth to make intercession for us” (Heb. 7:25). But more than all else, probably, is the fact that in Christ’s great work as king in the realm of truth, He was most closely related to His people. They were “laborers together with Him.” He the first great Apostle sent of God, yet Himself sending them even as the Father had sent Him; one in sympathy and one in effort, contemplated with special reference to the evangelization of the world they both properly constituted one party in opposition to all the powers of darkness and sin—*i.e.*, they were one complex “*Israel*.” In chap. 42:1, 19 they were both designated as “My servant.” To that chapter and to this use of the phrase “My servant,” this passage may tacitly allude, and this may account for His taking the name “*Israel*.” The last words of the verse would better express the original if read, “in whom I will glorify Myself.” Christ as the great Revealer of God shed peculiar and transcendent glory upon His character especially as a *God of love*—love at once great, pure, deep, exhaustless. The reader will readily recall that wonderful prayer of Christ, recorded in John 17, as exemplifying the interest and joy which He felt in this grand truth, that the Father had been glorified in the Son. H. C.

4. This verse teaches: 1. That the most faithful labors and the most self-denying toil and the efforts of the most holy life may be for a time unsuccessful. If the Redeemer of the world, the Son of God, had occasion to say that He had labored in vain, assuredly His ministers should not be surprised that they have occasion to use the same language. It may be no fault of the ministry that they are unsuccessful. The world may be so sinful, and opposition may be got up so mighty as to frustrate their plans and prevent their success. 2. Yet, though at present unsuccessful, faithful labor will ultimately do good, and be blessed. In some way and at some period all honest effort in the cause of God may be expected to be crowned with success. 3. They who labor

faithfully may commit their cause to God with the assurance that they and their work will be accepted. The ground of their acceptance is not the success of their labors. They will be acceptable in proportion to the amount of their fidelity and self-denying zeal. A servant of God will be approved of God according to his fidelity, and not according to the measure of his success. 4. The ministers of religion when they are discouraged and disheartened; when they labor in vain; when their message is rejected, and the world turns away from their ministry, should imitate the example of the Redeemer and say, “My judgment is with Jehovah. My cause is His cause; and the result of my labors I commit to Him.” To do this as He did, they should labor as He did; they should deny themselves as He did; they should honestly devote all their strength and talent and time to His service; and then they can confidently commit all to Him, and then and then only they will find peace, as He did, in the assurance that their work will be ultimately blessed, and that they will find acceptance with Him. *Barnes*.

The last clause is universally explained as an expression of strong confidence that God would make good what was wanting, by bestowing the reward which had not yet been realized. A.

5. The course of thought runs: The eternal Father formed Me from the womb to be His servant, to restore Jacob to Him, and Israel shall truly be gathered to Him, and I shall be honored in the eyes of the Lord (for this great achievement) “and My God shall be My strength”—the ground of all My success.

6. In the first clause, the real meaning is plain. It is *too small a thing* that Thou shouldst be My servant to restore Jacob and Israel (so much and no more would be too insignificant); I will also make Thee a light to the Gentiles and My salvation to the ends of the earth. It would be too little to save Israel only; I will make Thee the Saviour of all the Gentiles as well. The use of this passage by Paul (Acts 13:47) shows that He was not surprised at the unbelief and ruin of some of the Jews, and that He found His work and joy in turning to the Gentiles. The point of most value, however, in this quotation is the light it throws upon the mutual relations of Christ and His apostles in this great work of saving men: “For so hath the Lord commanded *us*, saying, I have set Thee (Jesus) to be a light of the Gentiles.” H. C.

Not only were the circumstances of Christ’s

life and death minutely pointed out, but His offices were also described. He was to be a *prophet*, like unto Moses (De. 18 : 18). This is expressly quoted by Peter in the Acts (3 : 22) as fulfilled by Christ. He was to be a *priest* (Ps. 110 : 4 ; Heb. 5 : 10). He was to be a *king* (Ps. 2 : 6 ; Matt. 28 : 18 ; 1 Cor. 15 : 25). His kingdom was to be one of peace (Isa. 9 : 6, 7 ; Mic. 4 : 3). His kingdom was also to include the Gentiles (verse 6 ; also 60 : 3, 5). Here, then, we have the three great offices of prophet, priest and king, united by prophecy in one person ; we have a kingdom of peace, and that kingdom one which was to include all nations. And all this is perfectly fulfilled in the person and kingdom of Christ. M. H.

7-12. The one great idea in this passage is that Christ shall bear to the Gentile world the knowledge and the power of salvation. The course of thought is essentially the same as in chaps. 52 : 13-15 ; 53 and 54.

7. The promise of exaltation and glory follows this brief sketch of His humiliation and disesteem. "Kings shall see," and they shall rise up to do Him honor ; princes also shall "worship ;" all because of Jehovah, ever faithful to fulfil His promises, as this name indicates, and "because the Holy One of Israel has truly chosen Thee" for His servant and His Great King of all the earth.

8. "In an acceptable time" means in a time of favor, a day of mercy, when the way is prepared for the exercise and the signal display of God's loving-kindness in the conversion of the heathen. "For a covenant of the people"—i.e., of the Gentile nations ; here as in chap. 42 : 6. Under this picture the whole earth will become a Canaan for the people of God, when the Gentiles shall have come into this relation. H. C.

In an acceptable time have I heard

Thee. These words, which are spoken to Christ in the person of God the Father, are applied by Paul to the Church in Corinth : This, says he, when the Gospel is imparted to you, is your time, which ye are concerned not to let slip. The argument drawn from hence is, that when the grace of God is offered, we must be very diligent to lay hold of and improve it ; knowing, as we must, that this life is the utmost period of the day of grace ; that the continuance of life is most uncertain ; and that we cannot be sure that God will extend to us the opportunities of grace so long as life does continue. *Dean Stanhope.*

That which is declared of the world before the Flood, of Nineveh, of the fig-tree, of Jeru-

salem, is the history of each separate soul. Every man has his day of grace. There comes to each man a crisis in his destiny, when evil influences have been removed or some strong impression made. It were an awful thing to watch such a spirit, if we knew that he is on the trial now, by which his everlasting destiny is to be decided ! It were more awful still to see a man who has passed the time of grace, and reached the time of blindness, and to know that the light is quenched forever, that he will go on as before, and live many years, and play his part in life, but that the Spirit of God will come back to that soul no more forever ! *F. W. Robertson.*

9. Figures accumulate to express the joyful change. The people are as prisoners coming forth from their prison-houses (see chap. 42 : 7) ; as men long in darkness, now coming forth to the light of day. They are also as the flock of the shepherd, feeding securely along their paths. All high places become their pasture grounds. H. C.—Christ shall free the souls of men from the bondage of guilt and corruption and bring them into the glorious liberty of God's children. He shall say to the prisoners that were bound over to the justice of God, and bound under the power of Satan, "Go forth." Pardoning mercy is a release from the curse of the law, and renewing grace is a release from the dominion of sin ; both are from Christ and are branches of the great salvation ; it is He that says "Go forth ;" it is the Son that makes us free, and then we are free indeed. He saith to them that are in darkness, "Show yourselves ;" "Not only see, but be seen, to the glory of God and your own comfort." H.

The charms by which the sorcery of sin bewitches men are very numerous and diverse in character. In one man it is a distrust of God's willingness to save, or, if to save, to save *him*. In another, it is an unwillingness to own the simplicity of God's methods of salvation. In the vast majority, however, it is not in any conceptions cherished about the way of salvation, but in something altogether more tangible and earthly. The whole truth is, that the man *loves something more than God*. In one it is his property ; in another, his reputation ; in another, his ease ; in another, his literary tastes ; in another, an unchristian employment or habit or association, which he feels to be at war with an earnest Christian life. In some it is an unwillingness publicly to profess religion, to encounter the ridicule of companions or to forgive an injury which rankles in the heart. Some such very simple thing is the citadel in which the

forces of guilty resolve intrench themselves. That is the secret reason why the soul is benighted in impotent convictions. Yet what a meanness of spirit does it seem to have indicated when the soul comes out into the liberty of Christ, to have shut itself up in that prison-house of remorse so long, and for such a thing !

Phelps.

9, 10. Those whom the prophet has thus represented as captives rescued from bondage and darkness into the glorious light and liberty of the Gospel, he next exhibits under the emblem of a flock, feeding at its leisure in secure pastures, guarded by its shepherd from the ill effects of the heat, and plentifully supplied with all necessary food ; an emblem not unfrequently used (see chaps. 30 : 24, 25 ; 40 : 11) to shadow out the future situation of the Church of Christ, safe under the protection and watchful care of the great Shepherd of souls, and blessed with the ample opportunities of grace which God shall afford her. *Vitringa.*

10. He shall bless them and supply their wants as if streams should break out in the desert. Or He will make their journey pleasant as if it lay by the side of running and refreshing streams. The whole figure in this verse is taken from the character of a faithful shepherd who conducts his flock to places where they may feed in plenty ; who guards them from the intense heat of a burning sun on sandy plains ; and who leads them beside cooling and refreshing streams. It is a most beautiful image of the tender care of the Great Shepherd of His people, and of the blessings which He bestows on His people in a world like this—a world in its main features, in regard to real comforts—not unaptly compared to barren hills and pathless, burning sands. *Barnes.*

Oh, sacred pledge of God, in which each word is priceless, pointing to a gain unspeakable ! To be guided, and that by Him, the merciful—to be guided gently by the springs of water—nay, what could give more joy and solace ? The benignant Guide chooses the way, and that way is the best ; opens the path, but always so that it shall lead us homeward ; makes the path easier, yet not by removing every stumbling-block, rather by making these the steps by which to climb to heaven. Gently “He shall lead them,” not hastily, not distractedly. Progress is sought, yet breathing time allowed—breathing time not merely when beside the full, swollen stream, but even by the springs, where the water is clearest, the refreshing most alluring. We are satisfied when we

may draw water out of the living stream. God leads His people close by the eternal fountain of salvation. Such a promise, we perceive, points evidently to that better land, where first these words are perfectly fulfilled : “They shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more.”

Even here below there is a joy attainable by us, yea, by the least of us, if only we belong to that blessed Israel, that accepts God’s guidance now from Babylon to Zion, and that takes, moreover, and unconditionally, that refreshment which He vouchsafes. Not “a guide shall be given thee,” not “they who know the road shall aid thee,” but “*He that hath mercy shall lead thee,*” is the promise of the Lord to us ; while, on the other hand, He claims unqualified obedience. *Van O.*

11. By a change of figure they are now a moving army or an Oriental caravan, and over all Jehovah’s mountains a noble highway is built for their safe and delightful pilgrimage to the heavenly city.

12. And now the calling of the Gentiles and their conversion to God appear under the idea of a vast convocation, their moving hosts converging from every part of the wide world to meet in the Zion of the living God, for His worship. “Behold,” see those gathering millions ! These come from afar ; those from the north and those from the west ; those others from the land of Sinim, or China and the farthest east. It can scarcely be doubted that the prophet represents them as gathering from the four cardinal points of the heavens. H. C. —It is well said by a missionary, that the verse before us is the central point of the prophetic discourse, of which it forms a part ; inasmuch as it embodies the great promise, which in various forms is exhibited before and afterward. This relation of the text to the context is important, because it creates a presumption in favor of the widest meaning that can be put upon the terms of the prediction. A.—The Gospel has not yet fulfilled the mission here predicted for it. But with most entire confidence the reader of prophecy may put his finger on this verse as on those which promise a reign of universal peace and love, and say, Here are things that have never yet been ; therefore they remain to be fulfilled.

13. These great thoughts enkindle the soul of the prophet (why should they not ?), and he calls upon the heavens to sing and upon the earth to be full of joy ; yea, upon the mountains to break forth in the swelling chorus, so that it shall really seem that all nature pours

out its soul in song, to praise God for the comfort He has given His people and the mercy He will show yet more to His afflicted. Not one of these good words can fail. The chorus is yet to be performed, and there will be glad hearts to fill it and to magnify the grace of God together!

14. With exquisite beauty and great force, the prophet turns back from this outburst of joy to note how Zion had felt and spoken during that long night of God's delay and of her sore trial. Then she had said, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." The Lord recalls those desponding words now for the sake of introducing the inimitable reply to them which follows. *H. C.*

15. I will not forget thee. The constancy of God's affection for His people is expressed by the strongest possible comparison derived from human instincts. There is a climax in the thought, if not in the expression. What is indirectly mentioned as impossible in one clause is declared to be real in the other. He first declares that He can no more forget them than a woman can forget her child, He then rises higher and declares that He is still more mindful of them than a mother. *A.*

What words shall express the love of God to His redeemed? "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will not I forget thee, saith the Lord: I have graven thee on the palms of My hands; thy walls are ever before Me." Is this the language of the Infinite? Does the Eternal Mind thus speak to us, not only through thoughts that necessarily run into the moulds of the temporal and the finite, but in figures and images so purely, so intensely human? Yes, we answer, it is the language of the Infinite, when He converses with the finite. But are these His very words? Yes, His very words, chosen and arranged in every lineament and fibre of their Hebrew tenderness. *T. Lewis.*

The affection and tenderness of an earthly parent are but faint resemblances of God's paternal love. In Him love is an infinite, overflowing fountain of beneficence. And then His love is as permanent as it is extensive. He is always in one mind, and therefore can never leave nor forsake His people. *R. W.*

"Can a mother forget her child? Yea, she may forget." But we have to do with a God, whose love is His very being; who loves us not for reasons in us, but in Himself; whose love is eternal and boundless as all His nature; whose love, therefore, cannot be turned away

by our sin—but abides with us forever, and is granted to every soul of man. We cannot believe too firmly, we cannot trust too absolutely, we cannot proclaim too broadly that blessed thought, without which we have no hope to feed on for ourselves, or to share with our fellows—the universal love of God in Christ. Let us individualize that love in our thoughts as it individualizes us in its outflow, and make our own the "exceeding broad" promises, which include us, too. God loves *me*; Christ gave Himself for *me*. I have a place in that royal, tender heart. Nor should any sin make us doubt this. He loved us with exceeding love, even when we were "dead in trespasses." He did not begin because of anything in us; He will not cease because of anything in us. We change; He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself. *A. M.*

Yet will I not forget thee. Oh, may faith fasten and live upon this precious word! May love be excited and joy increased by it! As though our dear Lord had said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," saved thee with an everlasting salvation, called thee by My grace, made thee know thy poverty and vileness, thy hopeless and helpless state; shall I ever be unmindful of thy distress, deaf to thy cry and unwilling to relieve thy wants? *W. Mason.*

God in the Old Testament is a loving Spirit, fatherly, kind and gracious in His utterances about Himself and in the teachings of the prophets about Him, as He was in the very words of Jesus Christ Himself. There are no words of sweetness so sweet, no words of graciousness so gracious, no providences of the Divine heart so touching and tender as we find in the Old Testament; and the God of Calvary is as truly the God of the Old Testament as the God of the New Testament. *Burnham.*

18. This expands the thought of the first clause of verse 17, the hastening home of His children. Lift up thine eyes and look all round on every side; see all these coming in from every quarter. Then with the solemnity of His oath, the Lord declares: All these shall be thy ornament and thy glory, to be worn on thy person as the bride wears her ornaments. The figure suggests that the Church is herself the bride, the Lamb's wife, now appearing in her queenly attire. (See Ps. 45: 8-17.)

19. In full accordance with the ancient theocratic state, Zion is a city with its surrounding country; but now under this great accession of her returning children, she is all too narrow for such a population. The sense is fairly put in the English version; yet the Hebrew exhib-

its that peculiar broken construction which very commonly results from strong feeling, thus: "For thy wastes and thy desolations, and the land of thy wasteness—for now thou wilt be too much straitened for the inhabitants." Her enemies who once swallowed her up—the same referred to in verse 17—are now far away.

21. This is the joyful surprise of the mother, seeing throngs of happy children who seem indeed to be her own, and yet she can scarcely imagine how they can be. She is saying in her heart (what it might not be altogether delicate to express), Who hath begotten for me these children, and whence do they come? The next verse gives the answer. H. C.

The image in this entire verse is one of great beauty. It represents a mother who in time of war had been suddenly deprived of all her children, and who had been made a widow, herself a captive and conveyed from land to land. She had been desolate, and had sat down and wept. She had seen ruin spread all around her dwelling, and regarded herself as alone. Suddenly she finds herself restored to her home and again surrounded with a happy family. She sees it increased beyond its former numbers, and herself blessed beyond all her former prosperity. She looks with surprise on this accession, and asks with wonder whence all these have come and where they have been. The *language* in this verse is beautifully expressive of the agitation of such a state of mind, and of the effect which would be thus produced. It indicates surprise, mingled with wonder and joy. It represents vast numbers coming to her, and filling the soul of the widowed mother with mingled amazement and pleasure. The idea here is plain. Jerusalem had been desolate. Her inhabitants had been carried captive or had been put to death. But she should be restored. And the Church of God should be increased by a vast accession from the Gentile world, so much that the narrow limits which had been formerly occupied—the territory of Palestine—would now be too small for the vast numbers that should be united to those who professed to love and worship God. *Barnes.*

23. The same promise is repeated in substance with a change of form. Instead of the nations, we have now their kings and queens; and instead of Zion's sons and daughters, Zion herself. This last variation, while it either perplexes or annoys the rhetorical precision, aids the rational interpreter by showing that the figures of the preceding verse, however natural and just, are not to be rigidly explained.

In other words, it shows that between the Zion of this passage and her children there is no essential difference, and that what is promised to the one is promised to the other. A.

I am the Lord: they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me. "Wait" is but a monosyllable; but it is fuller of meaning than any other word in the language, and it is applicable to all ages and to all circumstances. At the first slight view, merely to "wait" seems so simple a thing as scarcely entitled to be called a grace; and yet larger promises are made to it than to any other grace, except to faith; and hardly, indeed, with that exception, for the grace of "waiting" is part of the grace of faith—is a form of faith—is, as some would describe it, an effect of faith; or, more strictly, one of its most fruitful manifestations. Great and singular is the honor which God has set upon patient waiting for Him. Man, seeing not as God sees, sets higher value upon his fellows' active works—the bright deeds of days or hours. God values these also; but He does not assign them the same pre-eminence as man does; He does not allow them any pre-eminence over that constant and long-enduring struggle with the risings of the natural mind, which is evinced in long and steady waiting under all discouragements for Him—in the assured conviction that He will come at last for deliverance and protection, although His chariot wheels are so long in coming. *Anon.*

24. The course of thought turns here as it did in verse 14. Zion appears, saying, Lord, how can these things be? What! Shall the prey be wrested away from the mighty? Zion seems to assume that Satan holds the kingdoms of this world by right of possession, and wonders whether he can be ousted! The Lord answers in the next verse.

25. Yes; even the strong case put in the question only serves to illustrate the glory of that power which stands for the help and victory of Zion. When God undertakes, even the captives of the mighty conquerors are rescued from their grasp. Satan holds this world in his chains no longer. God Himself enters the lists to give battle against those that war against Zion. He will save her children.

26. The persistent foes of the Church and of her Messiah must meet this fearful doom. These figures bear upon their face their general significance. Who can say in what specific form these inflictions shall fall? Let these words suffice to show the people of God that their Redeemer is mighty; that He will plead and main-

tain their cause since it is also His own cause ; and that He will make a fearful example of His incorrigible and persistent enemies. And so also let these words suffice to show the wicked that they can never stand against the mighty God ; that, persisting in this madness, they have to expect only a doom unutterably

awful ! H. C.—The last clause winds up this part of the prophecy by the usual return to the great theme of the whole book, the relation of Jehovah to His people as their Saviour, Redeemer and Protector, self-existent, eternal and almighty in Himself, yet condescending to be called the Mighty One of Jacob. A.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER L.

- 50 :** ¹ **THUS** saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, wherewith I have put her away ? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you ? Behold, for your iniquities were ye sold, and for your transgressions was your mother put away.
- ² Wherefore, when I came, was there no man ? when I called, was there none to answer ? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem ? or have I no power to deliver ? Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness : their fish stinketh, because there
- ³ is no water, and dieth for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.
- ⁴ The Lord God hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary : he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth
- ⁵ mine ear to hear as they that are taught. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not
- ⁶ rebellious, neither turned away backward. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to
- ⁷ them that plucked off the hair : I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me ; therefore have I not been confounded : therefore have I set my face like a
- ⁸ flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me ; who will contend
- ⁹ with me ? let us stand up together : who is mine adversary ? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me ; who is he that shall condemn me ? behold, they all shall wax old as a garment ; the moth shall eat them up.
- ¹⁰ Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant ? he that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon
- ¹¹ his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that gird yourselves about with firebrands : walk ye in the flame of your fire, and among the brands that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand ; ye shall lie down in sorrow.

Chap. 50. This chapter contains no entirely new element, but a fresh view of several which have already been repeatedly exhibited. The first of these is the great truth, that the sufferings of God's people are the necessary fruit of their own sins (verse 1). The second is the power of Jehovah to accomplish their deliverance (verses 2, 3). The third is the Servant of Jehovah, His mission, His qualifications for it, His endurance of reproach and opposition on account of it (verses 4–9). The fourth is the way of salvation and the certain doom of those who neglect it (verses 10, 11). This perpetual recurrence of the same great themes in various combinations makes the mere division

of the chapters a comparatively unimportant matter. It should be ever borne in mind that these divisions are conventional and modern, and that in this part of Isaiah more especially they might have been omitted altogether without any serious inconvenience to the reader or interpreter. A much greater evil than the want of these divisions is the habit of ascribing to them undue authority and suffering the exposition to be governed by them, as if each were a separate prediction or discourse, instead of being arbitrary though convenient breaks in a continued composition, not materially differing from the paragraphs now used in every modern book.

1. The simplest and most obvious interpretation of the first clause is the one suggested by the second, which evidently stands related to it as an answer to the question which occasions it. In the present case, the answer is wholly unambiguous—viz., that they were sold for their sins, and that she was put away for their transgressions. The general idea of rejection is twice clothed in a figurative dress, first by emblems borrowed from the law and custom of divorce, and then by emblems borrowed from the law and custom of imprisonment for debt. A.

God indeed selleth us over to punishment, but not till we have first sold ourselves to sin; we first most unjustly sell away our souls, and then He most justly selleth away our bodies, our liberty, our peace. Let us beware that whatever we do we charge not God wrongfully, by making Him in the least degree the author of our sins or so much as an accessory to our follies. *Bp. Sanderson.*—When God chastens His children, it is neither for His pleasure (Heb. 12:10) nor for His profit; all that are saved are saved by a prerogative of grace; but those that perish are cut off by an act of Divine holiness and justice, not of absolute sovereignty. H.

2. God had come near to the people, by His word and providence, but without any suitable response on their part. The first clause is explanatory of their being *sold* and *put away*, as represented in the foregoing verse. The general truth which it teaches is, that God has never and will never put away His people even for a time without preceding disobedience and alienation upon their part. The other clause precludes the vindication of their unbelief and disobedience on the ground that they had not sufficient reason to obey His commands and rely upon His promises. Such doubts are rendered impious and foolish by the proofs of His almighty power. This power is first asserted indirectly by a question implying the strongest negation: *Is My hand shortened, shortened, from redemption? and is there with me no power (i.e., have I no power) to deliver?* A.

4. The object seems to be to indicate the relation of Jesus to the Father with special reference to His own human nature. Considered as man, a brother of our race, the Lord God taught Him; opened His ear; became the object of His constant trust for help. H. C.—God the Father hath given to Me, the Messiah, His eternal Word and Son, power to express Him fully unto His people; that I should be able to speak comfortably to the weary and distressed

souls; He doth not intermit to furnish me continually with His good Spirit. *Bp. Hall.*—As applied to Christ, it is descriptive of that power of conviction and persuasion which is frequently ascribed in the New Testament to His oral teachings. As His representative and instrument, the Church has always had a measure of the same gift enabling her to execute her high vocation. A.

Christ has come to give rest unto the weary and heavy-laden, light to the mind, peace to the conscience, love to the heart, and all is real, divine, eternal, inexhaustible. Not as the world giveth, for the world does not give freely; it only lends to recall, it only exchanges and barter, often taking more and better things from us than it bestows. The world's gifts are not what they seem to be. They do not enrich the heart; they do not last; and, above all, they are dead things which cannot give life. But Jesus gives, and gives Himself. Himself is the light, the life, the peace. God and man, eternal and in time, sinless and a Saviour, the Holy One and Redeemer; there is no question, no longing, no disease, which He does not solve, fulfil, heal. He is the way, where before we saw no way, no possibility of either departure out of our misery or arrival in the far-off eternal city. Only by Him can we come to the fountain of living water, to the Father. A. S.

There is not a Sabbath that the pastor does not face many disheartened people sitting in the pews, needing his word of good cheer. If he speaks brave, hopeful words he will help many a weary one to a victorious week. This is part of his work quite as really as the preaching the warnings and threatenings of the law and the Gospel of salvation and life. All of us, wherever we go, are continually meeting those whose hands hang down and whose knees are trembling, and it is our privilege and duty to lift up the one and strengthen the other. Helping by encouragement is one of the very best of all ways of helping. J. R. M.

5, 6. The voice, to which the Son of God hearkens, calls Him to lay down His life for the sheep. And He does not turn away from it, but ever replies, "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" He endured shame and spitting in loving obedience to His Father's will. The words are a distinct prophecy of our Lord's patient sufferings, recorded in the Gospels, and of these alone. He who suffers is the same Lord who clothes the heavens with blackness, and makes sackcloth their covering (verse 4). *Birks.*

6. This Scripture contains a description of the indignities our blessed Saviour suffered, and looks more like an historical narration of facts already past than a prediction of events several hundred years before they happened. We can have no doubt, if we compare this account with that of our Lord's passion in the New Testament, that Jesus of Nazareth was that Messiah. *Dean Stanhope*.—This is among those wonders of that great work, that the sovereign Lord of all, that binds and looses at His pleasure the influences of heaven and the power and workings of all the creatures, would Himself in our flesh be thus bound, the only Son bound as a slave and scourged as a malefactor; and His willing obedience made this an acceptable and expiating sacrifice; among the rest of His sufferings, *He gave His back to the smiter's*. *Leighton*.

It is the Holy One and the Just, the Perfect Son of God, who was publicly stripped, gibbeted, exposed to shame, compelled to die slowly, like a slave, nailed fast upon a cross. He had come into the world on a mission of love from the world above, a perfect character, clothed in the essential glory of a Divine nature, a being whom all the righteous spirits—angels, archangels and seraphim—had been wont to magnify and adore—such was the visitant who lighted, for once, on the earth, and the race of mankind could not suffer Him to live, tore Him away in their spite from His acts of healing and His gentle mercies even to themselves, and thrust Him out of the world in mockeries that forgot even the appearance of dignity. *Bushnell*.

The sin of sins is the failure to recognize Jesus for what He is. His person and claims are the touchstone which tries every beholder of what sort He is. How wonderful the silent patience of Jesus! He withholds not His face "from shame and spitting." He gives "His back to the smiters." Meek endurance and passive submission are not all which we have to behold there. 'This is more than an uncomplaining martyr. This is the sacrifice for the world's sin; and His bearing of all that men can inflict is more than heroism. It is redeeming love. His sad, loving eyes, wide open below their bandage, saw and pitied each rude smiter, even as He sees us all. They were and are eyes of infinite tenderness, ready to beam forgiveness; but they were and are the eyes of the Judge, who sees and repays His foes, as those who smite Him will one day find out. *A. M.*

Thou Son of the Blessed, what grace was

manifest in Thy condescension! Grace brought Thee down from heaven; grace stripped Thee of Thy glory; grace made Thee poor and despicable; grace made Thee bear such burdens of sin, such burdens of sorrow, such burdens of God's curse as are unspeakable. O Son of God, grace was in all Thy tears; grace came forth with every word of Thy sweet mouth; grace came out where the whip smote Thee, where the thorns pricked Thee, where the nails and spear pierced Thee. O blessed Son of God, here is grace indeed! unsearchable riches of grace! unthought-of riches of grace! grace to make angels wonder, grace to make sinners happy, grace to astonish devils! And what will become of them that trample under foot this Son of God. *Bunyan*.

7. The Saviour endured this cruel insult and this contradiction of sinners against Himself with the moral strength of a precious trust in His God to help Him. In this confidence He set His face like a flint, unflinching, patiently enduring, never recoiling or shrinking. *H. C.*—Our blessed Saviour, having fixed His end, pursued it resolutely, upon all occasions bearing up against all temptation and opposition; becoming thereby to us an example of true courage and unshaken constancy of mind. *Bp. Bradford*.

Our Lord was an example of holiness and obedience set before us, and His sufferings make the pattern perfect; had He lived in worldly prosperity, the poor and unfortunate would perhaps have upbraided the rich and prosperous for not following the copy, but would have thought their own hard circumstances a sufficient excuse for not attempting it. But what pretence is now left for any mortal? are we more wretched than our Master? are we poor and therefore discontented? Let us look to Him who had not where to lay His head, and yet paid a cheerful obedience to His God. *Bp. Sherlock*.

8. The terms in these verses are forensic, pertaining to judicial trials. Jesus had a personal experience under which this figure became fact. The figure leads the thought here: Who will arraign me before the judge? He who vindicates my cause (God) is near me. Who then will dare contend with me in litigation? *H. C.*

He is *near that justifieth me*. That is, God, who will vindicate my character and who approves what I do, does not leave nor forsake me, and I can with confidence commit myself and my cause to Him. The word *justify* here is not used in the sense in which it is often in the Scriptures, as denoting the act by which a sin-

ner is justified before God, but in the proper, judicial sense, He would declare Him *to be* righteous; He would vindicate His character; He would stand forth as His patron and judge, and would show Him to be innocent. This was done by all the testimonials of God in His favor, by the voice which spake from heaven at His baptism, by all the miracles which He wrought, showing that He was commissioned and approved by God, by the fact that even Pilate was constrained to declare Him innocent, by all the wonders that attended His crucifixion, showing that "He was a righteous man," even in the view of the Roman centurion, and by the fact that He was raised from the dead, and was taken to heaven, and placed at the right hand of the Father, thus showing that His whole work was approved by God, and thus furnishing the most ample vindication of His character from all the accusations of His foes. *Barnes.*

It was verified in Christ; by His resurrection He was proved to be not the man that He was represented, not a blasphemer, not a deceiver, not an enemy to Cæsar. The judge that condemned Him owned he found no fault in Him; the centurion that had charge of His execution declared Him a righteous man; so near was He that justified Him. But it was true of Him in a further and more peculiar sense; the Father justified Him when He accepted the satisfaction He made for the sin of man. He was near who did it; for His resurrection, by which He was justified, soon followed His condemnation and crucifixion; He was straightway glorified. *H.*

9. By a perfectly natural and common transition, the writer passes from comparison to metaphor, and having first transformed them into garments, says directly that *the moth shall devour them*, not as men, in which light he no longer views them, but as old clothes. This is a favorite comparison in Scripture to express a gradual but sure decay. (Cf. chap. 51: 8 and Hos. 5: 12.) *A.*

10. This prophecy of Messiah's sufferings and of His fidelity to the great work assigned to Him introduces a double lesson of comfort to the faithful, and of warning to His self-righteous adversaries. The Servant here is our Lord Himself, and the address is to His true and humble followers. *Birks.*

The sentiment of the verse is, If any one among you, really fearing the Lord and obeying the voice of His servant (the Messiah) has been walking in darkness analogous to that through which I have walked, under insult,

scorn, contempt, persecution, arraignment before courts of law, and with no light shining on his pathway, let him trust as I have done in the name of the Lord and stay upon His God. *H. C.*—Darkness of state and condition, in the Scripture, denotes disconsolation and trouble. To be then in darkness, where yet there is some light, some relief, though darkness be predominating, is sad and disconsolate; but not only to be, but also to walk—that is, to continue a course in darkness, and that with no light, no discovery of help or relief—this seems to be an overwhelming condition; yet sinners in this estate are called "to trust in the name of the Lord." *Owen.*

Trust in God is the grand principle of religion; it is another word, indeed, for faith, as that term is applied in the New Testament—the grand principle which distinguishes good men from men of the world. The former trust in God, and trusting in Him, their souls are kept in peace. They commit their way to Him, and resign their wills into His hands. *R. Hall.*

Faith is a plant that can grow in the shade, a grace that can find the way to heaven in a dark night. It can "*walk in darkness and yet trust in the name of the Lord.*" We read of promises to those that mourn, "*they shall be comforted;*" to the contrite, "*they shall be revived;*" to him that walks in darkness and the like—these belong to believers and none else; surely then there are some believers that are in the dark under the hatches of sorrow, wounded and broken with their sins and temptation for them; they are not such as are assured of the love of God; but their mourning is turned into joy, their night into light, their sighs and sobs into praise. *Gurnall.*

The felt need of God makes us stretch out the hands of our faith and take a stronger hold on God. The stormy sea makes us look for the helping hand of Jesus. And we often learn more of faith in one month of darkness and storm than in years of sunshine. When God would prepare us for higher work, for sweeter peace, for clearer light, He brings them by an increase of faith and increases our faith by trying our faith. The heavenward path of love and prayer is never shut to faith by earthly storms; it is opened by them. From the pillow of stones we see the gates ajar. In the darkness of earth are shown to us the infinite worlds above; our dreams become steps to heaven; and our hills of difficulty mountains of transfiguration. *Anon.*

Sin is a fact before us; sorrow is a fact we all have to face; death is a prospect we all

have to meet. We must find God in the cloud or we are lost. We do find Him in the cloud at Calvary. There sin was at its worst, sorrow at its saddest, and death ever present. There also was God bearing our sins, sharing our sorrows, bearing our death. It is not strange that the darkest hour should touch the heart sooner than the brightest day. When the Lord descends to us in a cloud He does more for us than when He shines from afar. There is the sinner's hope. There was a great longing in Moses to see the face of God. The answer was the coming of God to Moses in a cloud. Don't be afraid of any cloud that will bring the Lord nearer to you. There are cloud gates that must be passed before you see the glory of the Lord. Don't be afraid of the cloud hovering around you. Before the Lord comes you are afraid of it, but afterward you will have passed out of darkness into light and joy. *Gibson.*

Darkness is a reason for doubting everything but Christ, but a reason for trusting in Him, drawing near to Him and keeping close at His side. Darkness is a reason for distrusting one's self, and walking warily in prayer, and crying out for Christ's help, but certainly not a reason for unbelief. Darkness in ourselves and darkness around us is no reason for doubting the light, but for believing in it, loving it and pressing forward to it. Again we say darkness is no reason for doubt, but a strong reason for faith; for it is plain that though a man may be in darkness and have great reason to distrust himself, that is no reason for distrusting Christ, but for pressing after Him; for all the real light of the world is in Him, and he that followeth Him

shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. *Cheever.*

11. "Kindling a fire" and "compassing one's self with sparks of his own kindling" look as figures to the case of one who walks in darkness—*i.e.*, through scenes of calamity and sore trial, but who, instead of seeking light from God, kindles a little fire and surrounds himself with a few sparks of his own—a miserably poor substitute at best for such sunlight as God's! The end of such contempt of God and such reliance on self can be nothing better or other than to "lie down in sorrow." This warning fitly extends to all human endeavors to get up schemes of salvation. H. C.

They refresh and please themselves with a conceit of their own merit and sufficiency, and warm themselves with that; it is both light and heat to them. As they trust in their own righteousness, and not in the righteousness of Christ, so they place their happiness in their worldly possessions and enjoyments and not in the favor of God. Creature comforts are as sparks, short-lived and soon gone; yet the children of this world while they last warm themselves by them, and walk with pride and pleasure in the light of them. They are ironically bid to "walk in the light of their own fire." Make your best of it while it lasts. This shall ye have of Mine hand (says Christ, for to Him the judgment is committed), "ye shall lie down in sorrow." A godly man's way may be melancholy, but his end shall be peace and everlasting light. A wicked man's way may be pleasant, but his end and endless abode will be utter darkness. H.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LI.

- 51:1 HEARKEN to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look
 2 unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged. Look
 unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for when he was but one I called
 3 him, and I blessed him, and made him many. For the LORD hath comforted Zion: he hath
 comforted all her waste places, and hath made her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like
 the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the
 voice of melody.
 4 Attend unto me, O my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall go
 5 forth from me, and I will make my judgement to rest for a light of the peoples. My right-
 eousness is near, my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the peoples; the isles
 6 shall wait for me, and on mine arm shall they trust. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and

look upon the earth beneath : for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner : but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

7 Harken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law ; fear
8 ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye dismayed at their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool : but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation unto all generations.

9 Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord ; awake, as in the days of old, the generations of ancient times. Art thou not it that cut Rahab in pieces, that pierced the
10 dragon ? Art thou not it which dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep ; that made
11 the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over ? And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion ; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads : they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

12 I, even I, am he that comforteth you : who art thou, that thou art afraid of man that
13 shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass ; and hast forgotten the Lord thy Maker, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth ; and fearest continually all the day because of the fury of the oppressor, when he maketh ready to
14 destroy ? and where is the fury of the oppressor ? The captive exile shall speedily be loosed ;
15 and he shall not die and go down into the pit, neither shall his bread fail. For I am the Lord thy God, which stirreth up the sea, that the waves thereof roar : the Lord of hosts is his
16 name. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.

17 Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup
18 of his fury ; thou hast drunken the bowl of the cup of staggering, and drained it. There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth ; neither is there any that
19 taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up. These two things are befallen thee ; who shall bemoan thee ? desolation and destruction, and the famine and the
20 sword ; how shall I comfort thee ? Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the top of all the streets, as an antelope in a net ; they are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of thy God.
21, 22 Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine : thus saith thy Lord the Lord, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of staggering, even the bowl of the cup of my fury ; thou shalt no
23 more drink it again : and I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee ; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over : and thou hast laid thy back as the ground, and as the street, to them that go over.

Chap. 51. Throughout this chapter the tone is hopeful and full of promise. Zion is indeed seen in her militant state, but is exhorted not to fear her foes, and is assured that the cup of Divine chastisement is to pass from her lips to the lips of those who have been her oppressors. H. C.

The design of this chapter is to comfort the Church under her sufferings and the persecutions of her enemies ; and the argument of consolation insisted on is the constancy and perpetuity of God's mercy and faithfulness toward her, which shall be manifest in continuing to work salvation for her, protecting her against all assaults of her enemies and carrying her safely through all the changes of the world, and finally crowning her with victory and deliverance. *Edwards.*

The address, Harken, thrice repeated, and the summons, Awake, awake, also three times

(verses 9, 17 ; 52 : 1), mark the unity of this division of the prophecy nearly to its close (52 : 10). But these words also refer back to chap. 50 : 10, just before. *Birks.*

1, 2. This address is specially to the portion of God's ancient Zion designated as those who "follow after righteousness" and who "seek the Lord"—*i.e.*, who make personal holiness their special object and aim, and whose supreme endeavor is to please God, and thus find His presence and favor. The central thought is a state of sincere, earnest endeavor to *be* and to *do right*—to be like God and to obey Him always and perfectly. To encourage these truly Christian people, the Lord exhorts them to look to Abraham, their national progenitor, and note how, though he was one man when God called him out from his country and kindred, yet God made of him a great nation. So the implication is, God will multiply *you*, the small body

of His true worshippers. That God blessed him with a great increase, is the special point made here, on which also the new promise turns. The "rock" and the "hole of the pit" constitute but a single figure. It compares the Hebrew people to a stone cut from a quarry. Abraham was the old quarry from which all these stones were taken—the hole in the ground whence they were taken out. H. C.

3. The connection with verse 2 is obvious. "I have blessed and increased him, and I will bless and increase him; for Jehovah has begun to comfort Zion." **Made her wilderness like Eden.** This beautiful comparison is the strongest possible expression of a joyful change from total barrenness and desolation to the highest pitch of fertility and beauty. It is closely copied in Ezek. 31 : 9 ; but the same comparison, in more concise terms, is employed by Moses (Gen. 13 : 10). A.

Abraham's call and blessing were the sure earnest of Zion's recovered beauty and glory. The former things are here declared (41 : 22), that Israel may consider them and know their latter end. They are taught to discern the sovereign grace of God in the history of Abraham and Sarah ; and to gather, from God's past mercies, the assurance of still fuller blessings to come. The melody of our version here reflects worthily the beauty and fulness of the promise. *Birks.*

6. *Raise to the heavens your eyes, and look unto the earth beneath.* A similar form of address occurs above, in chap. 40 : 26. (Cf. Gen. 15 : 5.) Heaven and earth are here put, as in many other places, for the whole frame of nature. The next clause explains why they are called upon to look. *For the heavens like smoke are dissolved or driven away.* The writer uses distinct forms to express distinct ideas ; he first gives a vivid description of the dissolution as already past, and then foretells its consummation as still future. *And the earth like the garment (which grows old) shall grow old (or wear out).* The same comparison occurs above, in chap. 50 : 9, and serves to identify the passages as parts of one continued composition. Various hypotheses are reconcilable by making the first clause mean, as similar expressions do mean elsewhere, that the most extraordinary changes shall be witnessed, moral and physical ; but that amid them all this one thing shall remain unchangeable, the righteousness of God as displayed in the salvation of His people. (See chaps. 40 : 8 ; 65 : 17 ; Matt. 5 : 18 ; 1 John 2 : 17.) A.

But My salvation will perish never. These

promises can never become old and effete so as to lose their vitality. My righteousness, pledged here in the sense of veracity and ever energizing in the Divine bosom, can never become weak—can never be broken down and destroyed. Thus the infinite God guarantees His promises to His people. The mode of statement is analogous to that in chap. 54 : 10 : "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed ; but My kindness shall not depart from thee." (See also Jer. 31 : 35–37.) H. C.

7, 8. This third appeal answers, in its description of those addressed, to the last beatitude, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." Thus it belongs to those whose hearts are already "established with grace." They are here encouraged under the persecutions of the world by the promise of a sure deliverance. The persecutors of the faithful will become like a moth-eaten garment, but these confessors shall "receive a crown of righteousness that fadeth not away." *Birks.*

8. This righteousness and salvation shall be forever, and shall never be abolished. It is an everlasting righteousness that the Messiah brings in (Dan. 9 : 24), an eternal redemption that He is the Author of (Heb. 5 : 9). As it shall spread through all the nations of the earth, so it shall last through all the ages of the world. We must never expect any other way of salvation, any other covenant of peace or rule of righteousness than what we have in the Gospel, and what we have there shall continue to the end (Matt. 28 : 20). It is forever, for the consequences of it shall be to eternity ; and by this law of liberty men's everlasting state will be determined. This perpetuity of the Gospel and the blessed things it brings in is illustrated by the fading and perishing of this world and all things in it. H.

9. That bold metaphor of God sleeping and waking is often found in Scripture, and generally expresses the contrast between the long years of patient forbearance, during which evil things and evil men go on their rebellious road unchecked but by love, and the dread moment when some throne of iniquity, some Babylon cemented by blood, is smitten to the dust. Such is the original application of the expression here. But the contrast may fairly be widened beyond that specific form of it, and taken to express any apparent variations in the forthputting of His power. The prophet carefully avoids seeming to suggest that there are changes in God Himself. It is not He, but His arm—that is to say, His active energy, that is invoked to awake. It is true that God's arm

slumbers, and is not clothed with power. There are, as a fact, apparent variations in the energy with which He works in the Church and in the world. And they are real variations, not merely apparent. But the next chapter tells us that if God's arm seems to slumber, and really does so, it is because Zion sleeps. In itself that immortal energy knows no variableness. "He fainteth not, neither is weary." "The Lord's arm is not shortened that He cannot save." "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." But He works through us; and we have the solemn and awful power of checking the might which would flow through us; of restraining and limiting the Holy One of Israel. The life which comes from His Spirit is maintained by constant efflux from the fountain of Life, by constant impartation of His quickening breath. And as He must continually impart, so must we continually receive, else we perish. Therefore the first step toward awaking, and the condition of all true revival in our own souls and in our churches, is this earnest cry, "Awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord." God's awaking is our awaking. He puts on strength by making us strong; for His arm works through us, clothing itself, as it were, with our arm of flesh, and perfecting itself even in our weakness. Nor is it to be forgotten that this, like all God's commands, carries in its heart a promise. That earliest word of God's is the type of all His latter behests—"Let there be light"—and the mighty syllables were *creative* and self-fulfilling. So ever with Him, to enjoin and to bestow are one and the same, and His command is His conveyance of power. He rouses us by His summons, He clothes us with power in the very act of bidding us put it on. A. M.

10. Art Thou not it? Art thou not still the same? This refers to the *arm* of Jehovah, and the ground of the appeal is, that God must be the same, and that the same arm that dried up the sea and made a path for the Jewish people was still able to interpose and rescue them. This is the common illustration to which the Hebrew prophets and poets appeal when they wish to refer to the interposition of God in favor of their nation, or to give a striking illustration of His power. *Barnes*.

The allusion to the overthrow of Egypt is carried out and completed by a distinct mention of the miraculous passage of the Red Sea. The interrogative form of the sentence is equivalent to a direct affirmation that it is the same arm, or, in other words, that the same power which destroyed the Egyptians for the sake of Israel

still exists, and may again be exerted for a similar purpose. The confidence that this will be done is expressed somewhat abruptly in the next verse. A.

11. The logical connection with the verse preceding is full of force. Because God saved His ransomed ones at the Red Sea, "*therefore*" His redeemed (a word of like force) shall return and come with songs to Zion. Having the same God for their Redeemer and Saviour, why should not the same result be confidently expected? The words of this verse appear also in substance (chap. 35 : 10). H. C.

Come with singing unto Zion. Praise on earth is the prophecy and pledge, the foretaste and assurance of the heavenly song. Every joyful emotion here springing from every song of the grateful heart is an anticipation and earnest of the more exquisite delight which shall thrill that heart *there* completely attuned to the high, the perfect praise of Jehovah. Every ascription which *here* ascends from the praising spirit brings that spirit into truer, closer sympathy with the thousand times ten thousand circling the celestial throne, and fits it for a more perfect unison in singing that song which there ceaselessly ascends, that song ever new, ever rapturing, the song of Redeeming Love. Thus the offering of praise on earth is a preparation for heaven. Proceeding from a fervent, overflowing heart, it is heaven anticipated, heaven begun below. B.

12-16. This Divine Intercessor, the Word of God, is also the Comforter of His people. When they are crushed by their afflictions, He reminds them of His love in earlier days, and encourages them to hope for greater wonders still to come. *Birks*.

12. "I, even I, am He that comforts you." They prayed for the operations of His power, He answers them with the consolations of His grace, which may well be accepted as an equivalent. If God do not wound the dragon and dry the sea as formerly, yet if He comfort us in soul under our afflictions we have no reason to complain. He takes it among the titles of His honor to be "the God that comforts them that are cast down;" He delights in being so. Those whom God comforts are comforted indeed; nay, His undertaking to comfort them is comfort enough to them. H.

The Bible gives emphasis to the fact that *God is the chief comfort of those who suffer*. The hand that wounds is the hand that heals. The word that kills makes alive again. The Scriptures which teach this have become household words. Our morning and evening prayers re-

hearse them, and our children sing them. "God is our refuge," has but a short time ago made a belt of song around the world. "I, even I, am He that comforteth you. Fear not; I am with thee; I will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not." A child in the dark trusts in confiding silence to the unseen hand that leads him; such may every sorrowing man be, in the consciousness of God's proximity. *Phelps.*

It is God Himself who draws nigh to the heart drawing nigh to Him. Here and here only is peace and consolation. Seek it not in doctrines skilfully and soothingly arranged to give you calm slumber and a kind of logical and legal trust-deed security; seek it only in and from the living God. "I, even I, am He that comforteth you." It is a Divine prerogative. Thus God says often emphatically, "I, even I," to exclude all idols, however beautiful and elevated—to shut us up to Himself. God alone created the heavens and the earth—"I, even I;" God alone redeemed us, and forgiveth all our iniquities—"I, even I;" God alone, who knows the heart, can heal and gladden it. *A. Saphir.*

13. The Lord speaks of Himself as the comforter of Zion, He having not merely given her great promises, but also wrought for her great works of power and mercy. The Hebrew idiom means simply, Why then hast thou been afraid? The question expresses an actual and culpable distrust of God. For where now is the fury of thine old oppressors? In the bottom of the sea! Think of *their* doom, and cease to fear the rage of thine enemies! H. C.

When we disquiet ourselves with the fear of man, we forget that there is a God above him, and that the greatest of men have no power but what is given them from above; we forget the providence of God, by which He orders and overrules all events according to the counsel of His own will; we forget the promises He has made to protect His people and the experiences we have had of His care concerning us, and His seasonable interposition for our relief many a time, when we thought the oppressor ready to destroy; we forget our Jehovah-jirehs, monuments of mercy in the mount of the Lord. H.

16. The Lord God puts His words in the mouth of the Messiah and protects Him in the shadow of His hand, not to the end that He may create a new planet or recreate an old one, but *in order that* He may *do the great work of the Gospel age*, accomplish His mission connected with His first (and not His second) advent, for to this, beyond all question, the whole context refers. Compare also chap. 49:2, where the same phrases occur, and in the same relations of thought—the Messiah anointed and protected for His earthly mission. H. C.—The new creation thus announced can only mean the reproduction of the Church in a new form, by what we usually call the change of dispensations. The outward economy should all be new, and yet the identity of the chosen people should remain unbroken. For He whom God had called to plant new heavens and to found a new earth was likewise commissioned to say to Zion, Thou art still My people. A.

17. The prophet conceives of the Lord's providential judgments upon wicked nations as an intoxicating, maddening cup, given them to drink. (See. Jer. 25:15-29.) The Jews drank deeply of this cup at various points in their national history, and especially during their long captivity in Babylon. H. C.

21. Drunken, but not with wine. The antithesis in the last clause is to be completed from the context. Not with wine, but with the wrath of God, which had already been described as a *cup of reeling* or intoxication. The same negative expression is employed in chap. 29:9.

22. As the cup was the cup of God's wrath, not of man's, so God Himself is represented as withdrawing it from the sufferer's lips, when its purpose is accomplished.

23. The Israel of God, the Church, or chosen people, continued to exist under every change of dispensation and economy, and notwithstanding all its fluctuations and vicissitudes, shall ultimately be forever rescued by the same hand which destroys its enemies. This is the simple substance of the promise in the verse before us, which includes without specifically signifying all that has been thus represented as its meaning. A.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LII. 1-12.

- 52:1 AWAKE, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, sit thee down, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.
- 3 For thus saith the LORD, Ye were sold for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money. For thus saith the Lord God, My people went down at the first into Egypt to sojourn there: and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. Now therefore, what do I here, saith the LORD, seeing that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them do howl, saith the LORD, and my name continually all the day is blasphemed. Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore *they shall know* in that day that I am he that doth speak; behold, it is I.
- 7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! The voice of thy watchmen! they lift up the voice, together do they sing; for they shall see, eye to eye, when the LORD returneth to Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the LORD. For ye shall not go out in haste, neither shall ye go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rearward.

Chap. 52. Zion, thought of as embodied in the Jewish nation, is exhorted to arouse herself and come up from her state of depression and degradation. The figures are brought forward from the close of the previous chapter, and conceive of her as having been enslaved and oppressed—the essential idea, however, being her previous low spiritual state and her consequent weakness and disgrace before the nations—to be now exchanged for a new spiritual life under the Gospel dispensation. It was as if the nation had been abused for no good reason—sold, and no worthy price paid to the Lord, who was their rightful owner. Therefore God would redeem them without money (verses 3, 4). His name had been dishonored in their national sufferings; therefore He would vindicate it (verses 5, 6). Joyous messengers announcing the Messiah's advent and the Gospel age and reign are hailed as coming (verse 7); Zion's watchmen see them from the city watch towers, and greet them with songs of joy (verse 8). All the wastes of Zion are summoned to join in these songs, and rejoice in all the redemption God has wrought (verses 9, 10); the transition from the old age and state of Zion to the new is thought of as a solemn march or procession, jointly military and sacerdotal; the

Church moving out with slow and solemn tread, joyfully reposing in her God, who both leads her as the captain of her host and follows her as her rear-guard (verses 11, 12). And next "My servant," the great Messiah, comes distinctly to view. It is of no small importance to note that the ground idea of this chapter is the transition from the Mosaic to the Christian economy, which of course involves the coming of the Messiah and a glorious advance in the spiritual life of Zion. To aid in the illustration of this idea, the prophet alludes to the relations of Israel to ancient Egypt and to Assyria (verse 4). The reference to Egypt and to Assyria is historical and illustrative, and not at all prophetic. H. C.

1. The encouraging assurances of the foregoing context are now followed by a summons similar to that in chap. 51:17, but in form approaching nearer to the apostrophe in chap. 51:9. The last clause contains a general promise of exemption from the contaminating presence of the impure and unworthy, as a part of the blessedness and glory promised to God's people, as the end and solace of their various trials. A.

The implement of the Church's work is the Word; the arm of the Church's power is the

ministry; but the power itself is the Holy Ghost. In this view, the call of the text is full of meaning. It is the Spirit's call: Awake! awake! put on thy strength!"—the strength which he proffers. Thy strength is My strength—*put it on; put it forth.* The strength of the Church is a trinity—the Word, the Ministry, the Spirit—but it is a trinity in unity; for the power, the *one* power, is the Holy Ghost. The Word, in its adaptation to the wants of man, has a power of congruity; the ministry, by the bond that connects man with man, has the power of sympathy, but neither, alone, is adequate to the supernatural aim of the Church's mission. The Word, alone, cannot raise the dead; the ministry, alone, cannot convert or save; but the Holy Ghost can make both mighty—the Word a thunderbolt, and the ministry a flame of fire. The Word is the Spirit's word. It has a Divine authority behind it, a Divine life in it, a Divine power accompanying it. The ministry is the ministration of the Spirit, for, of every function, He is the author and the life. He calls the minister, qualifies him with gifts and graces, fills him with the fulness of the Gospel of peace, and makes his word an arrow that penetrates—a sword quick and powerful, a hammer that breaks in pieces, and a weapon that smites and prostrates the stronghold of Satan. *W. M. Paxton.*

Wheresoever we lift up the cry, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord," there follows, swift as the thunderclap on the lightning flash, the rousing summons, "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem!" Wheresoever it is obeyed there will follow in due time the joyful chorus, as in this context, "Sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; the Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." *A. M.*

2. The conception of Zion as covered with dust follows the thought in the close of the previous chapter where she lay on the ground, her enemies treading her into the very dust and soiling her garments. So also the "bands of her neck" assume that she has been a captive in bonds.

4. These are special cases under the general statements of the previous verse. Israel went down into Egypt for the innocent purpose of sojourning there a short time only, till the famine should be over. It was therefore a mere outrage on the part of Egypt's king to seize them and subject them to servile bondage. No price was paid to their Divine owner for them.

No regard was had to essential righteousness and justice. God might therefore fitly recover them with no money, but indeed at the cost to Egypt of her king and his whole army. Equally without cause was their oppression under the Assyrian power, and with like terrible retribution upon his vast army did the Lord avenge and deliver His people. *H. C.*

6. In contrast to this state of intense sorrow, God's people shall learn the truth, that He is "a very present help in the time of trouble." The words "in that day" prove that the time of deliverance was actually future when the prophet wrote, and had been made present in prophetic vision alone. *Birks.*—I paraphrase thus: Therefore, because I cannot endure such things longer, My people shall know My faithfulness, power and grace ("My name"); they shall surely know in that day when these coming events shall take place, that I am He who has said and is still saying, "*Behold Me!*" They shall experience ("know") the gloriously saving power of their own God, who has so often called their attention and sought to inspire their faith by this expression, "*Behold Me!*" *H. C.*

7. *How beautiful upon the mountains, etc.* This passage is applied by Paul to the ministers of the Gospel. (See Rom. 10:15.) The meaning here seems to be this: Isaiah was describing the certain return of the Jews to their own land. He sees in vision the heralds announcing their return to Jerusalem running on the distant hills. A herald bearing good news is a beautiful object; and he says that his feet—*i.e.*, his *running* is beautiful. He came to declare that the exiles were about to return; that their long and painful captivity was closed; and that the holy city and its Temple were again to rise with splendor, and that peace and plenty and joy were to be spread over the land. Such a messenger coming with haste, the prophet says, would be a beautiful object. Nahum, who is supposed to have lived after Isaiah, has evidently copied from him this image (1:15):

Behold upon the mountains the feet of the joyful messenger,

Of him that announceth peace;

Celebrate, O Judah, thy festivals; perform thy vows:

For no more shall pass through thee the wicked one;

He is utterly cut off.

Barnes.

Paul is chargeable with no misapplication of the words when he applies them to the preachers of the Gospel. The contents of the message are the manifestation of the reign of God, the very news which Christ and His forerunner pub-

lished when they cried, saying, The kingdom of God is at hand. A.

The word which is rendered "bringeth good tidings" means precisely one who is publishing this Gospel, corresponding to the Greek *Evangelizo*, and to the etymological sense of the word *Evangelist*, as we apply it—*e.g.*, to the first preachers of the Gospel. Precisely this expressive word, a herald of glad tidings, appears in chaps. 40 : 9 and 41 : 27, and serves to connect those passages with this. The reader will note the strength of this idea in the verse before us—repeated, expanded, modified in every form to give the fullest and strongest sense of *joyful tidings, tidings of good ; publishing peace ; publishing salvation.* H. C.

The Gospel of Christ, the Word Incarnate of God, entering into our life is indeed good tidings—good tidings as reaching down to the lowest depths where humanity still lingers, and growing with man's growth to the utmost bounds of his possible attainments, reaching and growing without limit. It turns our thoughts from what we can do to what God has done and is doing. It discloses in the idea of creation a splendor which communicates its light to all created things. It pierces to the depths of misery, and brings back even from their darkness a promise of hope. It transfigures all personal suffering by the thought of a fellowship with God in Christ. It is a new, an eternal commandment in which all things, our utmost hopes and efforts, are shown to be of Him, and through Him, and unto Him. This is the Gospel which all have to hold and to publish, to hold with a firmer grasp by publishing with a more personal devotion. Here is the joy which we all are charged to make our own by extending it to others. *Bp. Westcott.*

Thy God reigneth. Christ commissions His ministers to proclaim this joyful truth to Zion, His Church, that every member of His may receive it in faith, change the pronoun, and say, *My God reigneth.* Christ's reign is His people's glory, their triumph on earth, and the song of disembodied saints in glory. *W. Mason.*

8. The idea is, that when Jehovah should bring back and bless His people, the watchmen should have a full and glorious exhibition of His mercy and goodness. And the result should be, that they would greatly rejoice and unitedly celebrate His name. According to this interpretation, it does not mean that the ministers of religion should have the same precise views or embrace the same doctrines, however true this may be or however desirable in itself,

but that they should have an open, clear and bright manifestation of the presence of God, and should lift up their voices together with exultation and praise. *Barnes.*

8. Zion's watchmen are the first to see on the distant mountains the feet of those Gospel heralds. This conception is thoroughly Oriental. The bold form of the first clause is expressive. The far-seeing vision of the prophet gave him first the coming heralds seen crossing the distant mountain tops, rushing on with their burden of glad tidings. Next, lo ! a shout of the watchmen ! All as one they lift up their voice in joyous outcries ; at one and the same moment they all catch the sight of the coming heralds. They seem intuitively to seize the joyous import of their tidings and pour forth their soul and voice in triumphant song ! Is not the scene inspiring ? And why should it not be so painted and so felt ? H. C.

9. It is a cold, lifeless thing to speak of spiritual things upon mere report ; but they that speak of them as their own, as having share or interest in them, and some experience of their sweetness, their discourse is enlivened with firm belief and ardent affection ; they cannot mention them but their hearts are straight taken with such gladness as they are forced to vent in praises. *Leighton.*

9, 10. This section of the prophecy closes here with a glorious promise. It is rehearsed at the opening of the Baptist's message (Luke 3 : 6), but remains to be more fully realized in the last days. *Birks.*

10. The Lord girds Himself for mighty and glorious manifestations of His spiritual power that the ends of the earth may see His salvation. To make bare the arm is to gird the loins, leaving the arm uncovered and unincumbered for the most vigorous activities. History records of many celebrated warriors that they went into battle with their right arm naked. The genius of the Christian age is not centralization, but diffusion ; is not inaction, but earnest work—its great command being, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." This done, all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God. H. C.

The prominent encouragement to labor for the Christianization of the nations is found in the design and promise of God that every people and nation shall be willingly subject to the spiritual sway of the Redeemer, that the system of truth and faith which has been divinely promulgated shall reach and affect all human hearts and attain a universal and complete supremacy in the earth. Possessed of a complete

adaptation to man's moral condition and needs, and accompanied by the grace and might of God's Spirit, this Divine system is completely fitted to enter the heart, to subdue the will and to turn to *itself* the moving springs of affection and action in the soul. Thus it wins the individual. And from the individual its natural necessary tendency is to a continual diffusion. It makes each captivated soul a minister to extend its sway. As the numbers of its members increase, it gathers them into churches, and here organizes agencies for the wider dissemination of its influences. It makes each community in which it is established a centre from which its powerful quickening beams shall continually flow forth with an ever-widening compass and reach, until all are enlightened and its mighty, outspread circle shall include the race! For this the Christian system is fitted—admirably, wondrously fitted—as is the sun to give light and life to the worlds of His system! B.

Countless millions are shortly to awake from the sleep and darkness of a hundred ages to hail the day that will never go down. I see the darkness rolling upon itself and passing away from a thousand lands. I see a cloudless day following and spreading itself over all the earth. I see the nations coming up from the neighborhood of the brutes to the dignity of the sons of God. I see the meekness of the Gospel assuaging ferocious passions, melting down a million contending units into one, silencing the clangor of arms, and swelling into life a thousand budding charities which had died under the long winter. I hear the voice of their joy. It swells from the valleys and echoes from the hills. I already hear on the eastern breeze the songs of new-born nations. I already catch from the western gale the praise of a thousand islands. I ascend the Alps and see the darkness retiring from the papal world. I ascend the Andes and see South America and all the islands of the Pacific one altar. I ascend the mountains of Thibet, and hear from the plains of China and from every jungle and pagoda of Hindustan the praises of the living God. I see all Asia bowing before Him who eighteen centuries ago hung in the midst of them on Calvary. I traverse oceans and hear from every floating Bethel the songs of the redeemed.

"The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
Shout to each other; and the mountain tops,
From distant mountains, catch the flying joy;
Till, nation after nation taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous hosanna round."

E. D. Griffin.

11, 12. The conception here is that of the whole people of God moving in solemn procession in which the sacerdotal and military elements are singularly blended. The march through the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan is the model and furnishes the imagery and the descriptive terms. Apparently the thing really meant is the analogous march out from the old ritual economy into the new spiritual kingdom of the Messiah. Or perhaps we might better say, out from Judaism and the old Jewish Church, now effete and putrid in its moral corruptions, into the new Gospel kingdom. H. C.

11. Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord. It is said in Scripture that "they should be holy who bear the vessels of the Lord;" and it is generally believed that the position of a minister is one eminently favorable to personal holiness. But experience shows that such position brings with it great spiritual dangers. Familiarity with sacred things is sure to produce a feeling of indifference, unless counteracted by earnest prayer and secret communion with God. There is nothing more searing to the conscience than an unholy handling of the truth; the use of it for one's own selfish or ambitious ends. If it does not work to cleanse and hallow him who teaches it, it will defile and harden. That position of isolation and elevation in which a minister is placed is, also, dangerous as inspiring pride and self-confidence. Watching over others, he is tempted to forget to keep watch over himself. If there is any one who is called to scrutinize his own heart, and apply diligently the truth he teaches to himself, it is he who ministers in God's temple. *Churchman.*

12. This verse is crowded with allusions to the earlier history of Israel, some of which consist in the adaptation of expressions with which the Hebrew reader was familiar, but which must of course be lost in a translation. Thus the hasty departure out of Egypt is not only recorded as a fact in the Mosaic history (Ex. 11:1; 12:33, 39), but designated by the very term here used מִצְרַיִם (Ex. 12:11; De. 16:3), meaning terrified and sudden flight. There is likewise an obvious allusion to the cloudy pillar going sometimes before and sometimes behind the host (Ex. 14:19, 20). "For" has reference to the promise, implied in the preceding exhortation, of protection and security. A.

The Lord's people are bidden go out with displayed banner, not in haste, or as cowards; and the reason is given, Because the Lord will go before them in the vanguard, and behind

them in the rearward, and shall so compass them that they need to stand in awe or be feared for none. Thus He would have them avowing their Lord and boldly professing holiness. *Dickson.*

7-12. I prefer the interpretation of this passage which applies it primarily and specially to the change from the Mosaic to the Gospel dispensation, including as its leading events the advent of the Messiah, the setting up of His kingdom and the proclamation of the Gospel. 1. Because of the connection of this passage with that which immediately follows (52:13-15 and 53), where we have a very specific description of the great personage who is here represented as coming and reigning, and as leading His people forth into a new spiritual world of life and labor, this personage being surely the Messiah and none other. 2. Because of the close analogy of this passage with chap. 40:1-11, which manifestly refers to this great transition from the Mosaic to the Christian age, coupled with the coming of Christ. 3. Because the entire passage admits of a natural, easy and forcible construction on this hypothesis. *H. C.*

Here the chapter should have closed. Here closes the account of the return of the exiles from Babylon. The mind of the prophet seems here to leave the captive Jews on their way to their own land safe, with Jehovah going at their head and guarding the rear of the returning band, and to have passed to the contemplation of Him of whose coming all these events were preliminary and introductory—the Messiah. *Perhaps* the rationale of this apparent transition is this. It is undoubtedly the doctrine of the Bible that He who was revealed as

the guide of His people in ancient times, and who appeared under various names, as “the angel of Jehovah,” “the angel of the covenant,” etc., was He who afterward became incarnate—the Saviour of the world. So the prophet seems to have regarded Him; and here fixing his attention on the Jehovah who was thus to guide His people and be their defence, by an easy transition the mind is carried forward to the time when He would be incarnate, and when He would die for men. Leaving, therefore, so to speak, the contemplation of Him as conducting His people across the barren wastes which separated Babylon from Judea, the mind is, by no unnatural transition, carried forward to the time when He would become a man of sorrows and when He would come to redeem and save the world. According to this supposition, it is the same glorious Being whom Isaiah sees as the protector of His people, and almost in the same instant as the man of sorrows; and the contemplation of Him as the suffering Messiah becomes so absorbing and intense, that he abruptly closes the description of Him as the guide of the exiles to their own land. He sees Him in His humiliation. He sees Him as a sufferer. He sees the manner and the design of His death. He contemplates the certain result of that humiliation and death in the spread of the true religion, and in the extension of His kingdom among men. Henceforward, therefore, to the end of Isaiah, we meet with very few references to the condition of the exiles in Babylon, or to their return to their own land. The mind of the prophet is absorbed in describing the glories of the Messiah, and the certain spread of His Gospel and His kingdom around the globe. *Barnes.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTERS LII. 13-15; LIII.

THE SUFFERING MESSIAH.

52:13 BEHOLD, my servant shall deal wisely, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall
 14 be very high. Like as many were astonished at thee, (his visage was so marred more than any
 15 man, and his form more than the sons of men,) so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall
 shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that
 which they had not heard shall they understand.

53:1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the LORD been
 2 revealed? For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground:
 he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should
 3 desire him. He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with
 grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
 4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken,
 5 smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised
 for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are
 6 healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way;
 and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself and opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is
 led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb; yea, he opened not his
 8 mouth. By oppression and judgement he was taken away; and as for his generation, who
among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living? for the transgression
 9 of my people was he stricken. And they made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich
 in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.
 10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make
 his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure
 11 of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be
 satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: and he shall bear their
 12 iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil
 with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the
 transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

CHAPS. LII. 13-LV. MESSIAH'S SUFFERINGS
AND REWARD.

THE clear prediction of the sufferings of Christ, with which this section begins, forms the centre and heart of these later prophecies. It reveals the Divine method for accomplishing the second part of the opening promise to Zion, "that her iniquity is pardoned;" while it sets before the Church, in plainest outlines, the great Sacrifice and Divine Sin-offering of the Incarnate Son of God. It also prepares the way for a glorious promise of the fruitfulness of the true Church, delivered at length from the reproach of long ages of barrenness, and later signs of desertion and neglect, and of her growth into a beautiful city of God; with an appeal to all the Gentiles once more, to come and partake freely of the sure mercies provided

for them in the Son of David, the promised Immanuel, the Lamb of God, appointed to take away the sin of the world. *Birks.*

52:13-53:1-12. Many centuries before Christ's death and resurrection a prediction was uttered, which not only foretells these events down to the minutest detail, but expounds their significance in such a way as afterward apostles, Church fathers, reformers, only did. . . . If the resurrection of Christ is a fact, if His death and resurrection are *the* central facts of history, which we know them to be, and if Jesus was justified in declaring Himself to be the Messiah and His entire work to be the fulfilment of the law and the prophets, it will then seem perfectly natural and becoming that the preparatory revelation should foreshadow and foretell these particular facts in the fullest and exactest manner; and we see that

Jesus and Paul were specially careful to demonstrate the Divine necessity of these fundamental facts from the prophetic word of the Old Testament. *Auberlen*.

52 : 13-15. Here Jehovah speaks. He speaks of His servant the Messiah, and describes the state of His humiliation and of His subsequent exaltation. These verses contain in fact an *epitome* of what is enlarged upon in the next chapter. The sum of it is, that His servant should be, in the main, or on the whole, prospered and exalted (verse 13) ; yet He would be subjected to the deepest trial and humiliation (verse 14) ; but as the result of this, He would redeem the nations of the earth, and their kings and rulers should regard Him with profound reverence (verse 15). A display of the Divine perfections would accompany the work of the servant of Jehovah such as they had never beheld, and they would be called on to contemplate wonders of which they had not before heard. *Barnes*.

The preceding context (52 : 1-12) treats directly of the coming of the Messiah and of the opening of the Gospel age, the grand transition from Judaism to Christianity—the latter, thought of as opening a new and glorious era of spiritual light and of the power of Divine truth and of the Spirit unto salvation for all the tribes of the earth. Applying it to the transition from Judaism to Christianity, the connection of verse 13 with what precedes is direct and close. Nothing could be more appropriate than to pass from general views of the Gospel age to a more specific view of its great central personage, the Messiah. The connection becomes even more close if we accept the correct view of “the God of Israel their rearward” as presented in the clause immediately preceding. For, who was He that moved at the head of the columns of Israel in their forty years’ procession through the wilderness, manifesting His presence in the pillar of cloud and of fire ? His character is well defined and His person identified in these words : “I will send an angel before thee : beware of Him and obey His voice, provoke Him not ; for He will not pardon your transgressions, for *My name is in Him*” (Ex. 23 : 20-23). This “angel,” so called because *sent* on this special mission, can be no other than the Messiah, called “the God of Israel” because He led them through that wilderness to Canaan. Here also He appears in analogous relations to His people in the Christian age as the Lord’s servant.

The connection of this passage (verses 13-15)

with chap. 53 is also direct and immediate. Indeed, the passage (chap. 53 : 1-10) takes up and expands the thought, briefly presented in the parenthesis (chap. 52 : 14), showing how it came to pass that “His visage was so marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men.” The remaining verses (chap. 53 : 10-12) correspond with the leading thought in chap. 52 : 14, 15—the wonderful relation between Christ’s humiliation and sufferings on the one hand, and His transcendent success in saving lost men on the other.

As to the personage spoken of here as “My servant,” only one opinion can be sustained—He is the great Messiah. The connection with the verses preceding shows it. The usage of this term in 42 : 1-4 ; 43 : 10 ; 49 : 3, 6 ; 53 : 11, and the New Testament quotations of this class of prophecies (*e.g.*, Matt. 12 : 18-21), combine to place this construction beyond all doubt. Furthermore, the perfect coincidence between this passage and the New Testament doctrine of Christ, first crucified, then rising triumphantly and exalted gloriously, and rewarded with victorious success in the salvation of the nations—brings in an array of evidence which it would seem no candid mind can resist.

52 : 13. Deal wisely. All His ways will be characterized by consummate wisdom. He will show that He understands perfectly the moral nature of the race He came to save, and will bring the best possible appliances of truth and motive to bear on their consciences and on their hearts. Gifted with such wisdom, and managing His stupendous mission to earth so wisely, the consequence will be, “He will be exalted and lifted up, and be very high.” The drift of this entire passage, closing with chap. 53, contemplates, not Christ’s simple exaltation on His throne in heaven, irrespective of His success in His work as *Saviour* of men, but precisely His success in this great work—the glory of victory over Satan and sin in the grand conflict in which human souls, the living nations of men, are the prize for the conqueror. H. C.

The solemn administration of Christ’s kingly office could not take place till the prophetic and priestly were discharged ; the one, by teaching His people and raising their affections and desires by the clearest revelation of happiness in a future state ; the other, by making intercession for them, by the atonement of bloody sacrifice, the sacrifice of Himself. This is plainly told us in the ensuing chapter, the twenty-second Psalm, and other prophecies of the Old Testament, which Paul does in effect

but expound in Heb. 2 : 10 ; 10 : 12, 13 ; Phil. 2 : 7-11. *Stanhope.*

What being is He who, inverting all the ordinary modes of judgment, is "to sprinkle many nations," and "be exalted and extolled and be very high," and "see His seed and prolong His days;" because He is "brought as a lamb to the slaughter," and "hath poured out His soul unto death;" because "He has made intercession for the transgressors;" because "He is despised and rejected of men," "wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities;" because in short He is the lamb "on whom God has laid the iniquity of us all?" There stands the picture on the page of prophecy—who shall ever be seen to answer it? Centuries come and go, but the lamb that is to be struggles all this time in the womb of providence—expected and not seen, yet waiting always for the birth.

At last the fulness of time is come; when a strange, new prophet appears, announcing the kingdom of God now at hand. And he breaks out suddenly at his preaching and baptism by the Jordan, as a particular unknown man is seen approaching to claim the baptism, in the strangely worded salutation—"Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Now at last the advances and preparations of so many ages are ended, the Lamb of God is come. Only what conceivable impulse, if not the direct impulse of the Spirit of God, could have opened the prophet's mouth in this strangely worded salutation? And who is He that He should bear this appellation? That will be known some three years hence more perfectly. When this wonderful, only spotless being of the world, after having breathed purity and love on it for so long a time, goes to His cross in dumb submission to His enemies, and dies there staining the fatal post with His blood, having yet no bone of His passover-body broken, we begin to catch some first intimation of the prophet's meaning, when he declares—"He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter," also of the New Testament prophet in his strange salutation—"Behold the Lamb of God." And then what does He Himself do, three days after, when He encounters the two disciples going back, heavy-hearted, into the country, but open to them all the ancient Scripture, showing out of it how certainly Christ ought to suffer, and so to be the Lamb of prophecy. *Bushnell.*

14, 15. The parenthetic clause in verse 14 suggests the grounds of the astonishment occasioned by the aspect of this servant of the Lord

during His humiliation. His visage (general aspect) was that of one worn, wasted and wan—a fearful sufferer, surpassing in these respects what they had ever seen among men. Could He be a King and yet wear such an aspect? Could He be a good man, and yet such a sufferer, moving in a rank so low, and in poverty so extreme? So the many thought, and hence they were *astonished* at Him—the prophet using here a verb which as Dr. Alexander remarks "expresses a mixture of surprise, contempt and aversion." Such was this "servant" of God in the days of His humiliation in the flesh. With this, the prophet puts in strong antithesis the days of His subsequent success and glory. The many *individuals* were amazed at His marred visage, and saw only things toward which they felt contempt and aversion; but the many *nations* shall be baptized into a new life unto God; their kings shall shut their mouths in reverential awe before Him, rejoicing and admiring that through Him they see what no tongue had ever told them before.

The word "sprinkle" is richly expressive. Its established use in the Mosaic ritual clothes it with significance as an emblem of moral purification, bringing the sprinkled one into a new moral state and into new moral relations to God as both forgiven and cleansed. Ezekiel takes up from Isaiah this very term and expands its precious significance, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes that ye may keep My judgments and do them" (Ezek. 36 : 25-27). H. C.

15. The wonders of redemption would stand by themselves as unparalleled in all that they had heard or seen. What is here predicted has been fulfilled. The mystery of the incarnation and the atonement, the sufferings and the death of the Redeemer, His exaltation and His glory, are events which are unparalleled in the history of the world. They stand by themselves, and they will stand by themselves forever in the history of human events. They are events *fitted* in their nature to excite the profoundest admiration and wonder. That the Son of God should become a man; that His visage should be so disfigured by grief as to have scarcely the aspect of a human being; that He should suffer and die as He did; and that He should be exalted as He is over this whole world, and have the most elevated place

in the universe at the right hand of God, are all events fitted to excite the deepest wonder and the profoundest admiration. And it has been done. The prophecy has been fulfilled. It has been a fact that kings and princes have bowed with profound veneration at the name and presence of the Redeemer; and from the time of Constantine not a few of earth's mightiest monarchs have professed a profound regard for the character and the laws of the Messiah. *Barnes.*

Chap. 53 contains a more minute explanation and statement of what is said in general in chap. 52: 13-15. For convenience, it may be regarded as divided into the following portions:

1. An expression of amazement and lamentation at the fact that so few had embraced the annunciation respecting the Messiah, and had been properly affected by the important statements respecting His sufferings, His death and His glorification (verse 1). The prophet laments that so few had credited what had been spoken, and that the power of God had been revealed to so few in consequence of the coming and the work of the Messiah.

2. A description of His rejection, His sufferings, His death (verses 2-10). Here the prophet describes the scene as actually passing before his eyes. He speaks as if he himself were one of the people—one of the Jewish nation—who had rejected Him and who had procured His death. He describes the misapprehension under which it was done, and the depth of the sorrow to which the Messiah was subjected, and the design which Jehovah had in view in these sufferings.

His appearance and rejection are described (verses 2, 3). He is as a root or shrub that grows in a parched soil without beauty; He is a man of sorrows, instead of being, as they expected, a magnificent prince; He has disappointed their expectations, and there is nothing that corresponded with their anticipations, and nothing, therefore, which should lead them to desire Him. He is, therefore, rejected and despised. The *design* for which He endured His sorrows is stated (verses 4-6). He was thought by the people to be justly put to death, and they judged that God had judicially smitten and afflicted Him (verse 4). But this was not the cause. It was because He had borne the sorrows of the nation, and was wounded for their sins (verses 4, 5). They had all gone astray, but Jehovah had caused to meet on Him the iniquity of all. The *manner* of His sufferings is described (verses 7, 8). He was patient

as a lamb; was taken from prison and cut off. The manner of His *burial* is described (verse 9). It was with the rich. The *reason* why He was thus buried, and why His grave was thus distinguished from that of malefactors was, that in fact He had been holy and had done no evil. God, therefore, took care that that fact should be marked even in His burial, and though He *died* with malefactors, yet, as the purpose of the atonement did not require ignominy *after* death, He should not be *buried* with them. The *design* for which all this was done is stated (verse 10). It was that His soul might be made an offering for sin, and that it was thus well pleasing or acceptable to God that He should suffer and die.

3. The result of His sufferings and humiliation, the reward, the glorification, is described (verses 10-12). He should see a numerous spiritual posterity, and should be abundantly satisfied for all His pains and sorrows (verses 10, 11). By the knowledge of Him, a great number should be justified and saved (verse 11). He should be greatly honored, and should proceed to the spiritual conquest of all the world (verse 12). *Barnes.*

This chapter is so full a description of our blessed Saviour's sufferings that it looks more like a history than a prophecy; and might with more reason be suspected to be a copy drawn from His life than not to be a description of it. But this Scripture was in being long before our Lord was born, and was in the keeping of His enemies; of those who hated and despised Him, and at last put Him to a shameful death; and were at once the preservers and the fulfillers of the prophecy. *Bp. Sherlock.*—It is certain that both ancient and modern Jews interpret it of the Messiah. *Dean Allix.*

This is the clearest and strongest of all the prophecies of the Old Testament. It is an advantage which it possesses, that it is intermixed with no other subject. It is entire, separate and uninterruptedly directed to one scene of things. The application of it also to the evangelical history is plain and appropriate. Here is no double sense, no figurative language but what is sufficiently intelligible to every reader of every country. *Paley.*

From that prophet, justly called evangelical, who was the first commissioned to lift up the veil that covered the mystery of our redemption and to draw it forth to open view from beneath the shade of Jewish ceremonies and types, through which it had been hitherto but faintly discerned, we have a description of that great

propitiatory sacrifice whereby our salvation has been effected, as plain as it is possible for language to convey it. Matthew (8 : 17) and Peter (1 Epistle 2 : 24) directly recognize the prophecy as applied to Christ ; and yet more decisive is the passage, in Acts 8 : 35, in which the eunuch reading this very chapter, and demanding of Philip, *of whom speaketh the prophet this ?* it is said, that *Philip began at the same Scripture, and preached unto Him Jesus.* *Abp. Magee.*

In Isa. 53 it is the prophet who comes at once as *priest* and *king* ; and the way from the unobserved activity of the prophet is represented as leading to glory and dominion through the deepest humiliation and scorn of the atoning death. The *priesthood* is unquestionably included in verse 10, the *kinghood* in verse 12. The expressions and figures have an Old Testament character, and thus are true to nature and full of poetic life. The thoughts are clear, and constitute the Gospel, the New Testament in the Old. For One who in this way unites in Himself the three theocratic offices, prophet, priest and king, is the specific close of the old covenant. Such an One is nowhere to be found but in Jesus Christ ; in Him found in most perfect fulness. *Auberlen.*

1. Who hath believed our report ?

It is to be remembered that the scene of this vision is laid in the midst of the work of the Redeemer. The prophet places himself in vision where he has a view of the Messiah. He sees Him a sufferer, despised and rejected. He sees that few come to Him, and embrace Him as their Saviour. He recalls the "report" and the announcement which he and other prophets had made respecting Him ; he remembers the record which had been made centuries before respecting the Messiah ; and he asks with deep emotion, *as if present* when the Redeemer lived and preached, who had credited what he and the other prophets had said of Him ? The mass had rejected it all. The passage, therefore, had its fulfilment in the events connected with the ministry of the Redeemer, and in the fact that He was rejected by so many. The Redeemer was more successful in His work as a preacher than is commonly supposed, but still it is true that by the mass of the nation He was despised ; and true that the announcement which had been made of His true character and work was rejected. *Barnes.*

In all these villages and cities there are a great many men who treat the whole system of positive Christianity, both doctrine and ordinance, with indifference. They never acknowledge any acquaintance with Revelation, in the

street, nor invite it to their houses, till that one guest pushes in which they hold at bay as long as medicine and fear can do it ; and then, inconsistently enough, they ask in, to meet that dark stranger on the way to the graveyard, the minister of the risen Christ, whom they had disowned all their lives. Now, no believer in the reality of his faith, whether he be minister or layman, can look this strange problem in the face without painfully asking the question again and again, What does it mean ? What can break up this strange unconcern ? F. D. H.

Arm of the Lord. There is nothing within the compass of God's love to bestow of which Christ is not the giver. There is nothing Divine that is done in the heavens and the earth of which Christ is not the doer. The representation of Scripture is uniformly that He is the activity of the Divine nature ; that He is the energy of the Divine will ; that He is, to use the metaphor of the Old Testament, "the arm of the Lord"—the forthputting of God's power ; that He is, to use the profound expression of the New Testament, the *word* of the Lord, cognate with and the utterance of the eternal nature ; the light that streams from the central brightness, the river that flows from the else scaled fountain. As the arm is to the body and as is the word to the soul, so is Christ to God—the eternal Divine utterance and manifestation of the Divine nature. And, therefore, to talk about anything that a man can need and anything that God can give as not being given by Christ is to strike at the very foundation not only of our hopes, but at the whole scheme of revealed truth. He is the giver of heaven and everything else the soul requires. A. M.

2. Instead of directly answering the questions of verse 1, showing who or how many, the prophet quietly assumes the truth which the questions imply, and proceeds to assign the occasion. He speaks in the name of the Jewish people who were contemporaries of Christ during His earthly life. They thought the nation needed a mighty conqueror to place Judah at the head among human kingdoms. In such a Messiah they would have seen all beauty and comeliness. In the lowly Jesus they saw none. H. C.—Blinded by their prejudices, they could not bring themselves to believe that the prediction that the Messiah should wield a sceptre was fulfilled in one who held only a reed ; that the prediction that the Messiah should wear a diadem was fulfilled in one who was crowned only with thorns ; or that the prediction that the Messiah should occupy a throne was fulfilled in one who occu-

pied only a cross. The event, which ought to have corrected their error and suggested to them the true interpretation, instead of leading them to spiritual ideas of His character and reign, only drove them to the mad extreme of contempt, crucifixion and rejection. *Symington.*

There is no beauty that we should desire Him. He does not come with the regal pomp and splendor which it was supposed He would assume. He is apparently of humble rank; He is poor; He has few attendants; and He has disappointed wholly the expectation of the nation, and is not such a prince as they had desired. In regard to the personal appearance of the Redeemer, it is remarkable that the New Testament has given us no information. There was evidently *design* in this; and the purpose was probably to prevent any painting, statutory or figure of the Redeemer that would have any claim to being regarded as correct or true. They evidently intended that His image should not be set up as an object of worship; and designed probably that the view of Him as a man should be comparatively obscured in the contemplation of Him as Divine. As it stands in the New Testament, there is just the veil of obscurity thrown over this whole subject which is most favorable for the contemplation of the incarnate Deity. We are told that He was a man; we are told also that He was God; and the image to the mind's eye is as obscure in the one case as the other; and in both we are directed to His moral beauty, His holiness and benevolence, as objects of contemplation, rather than to His external appearance or form. *Barnes.*

3. Rejected. Behold what a return Israel made for benefits! They slew their Benefactor, rendering evil for good, death for life. Him who had raised their dead, healed their lame, cleansed their lepers, opened the eyes of their blind, they nailed on the wood; they hung up on the tree Him who spread out the earth; they pierced with nails Him who laid the foundations of the world; they bound Him who absolved sinners; they gave Him vinegar and gall to taste who offered the food and drink of life and righteousness; they marred His hands and feet who had brought healing to theirs; they closed His eyes who had opened theirs; they committed Him to the sepulchre who raised up the dead, not only before His Passion, but even while hanging on the cross. Creation, in amazement, said, "What is this new mystery?" *Alexander, of Alexandria.*

All the rationalistic subterfuges by which

this description is applied to the Jewish nation suffering for the heathen, or to the company of the prophets suffering for the nation, are overthrown by this single word, the *Man of sorrows*, which can only be applied to a person. M. Renan evidently feels this. Accordingly, he applies this passage to some one of those unknown righteous men whose blood crimsoned the streets of Jerusalem at the taking of that city. Read and judge. The sin of the world expiated, the designs of God accomplished, eternal intercession made by — some righteous man put to death by Nebuchadnezzar! This interpretation is the note of despair. *Golet.*

4-6. The great emphasis of this part is laid on the vicarious nature of the sufferings. Seven times is that asserted in these few verses. Bearing our sicknesses, weighted with our pains, pierced for transgressions of ours, crushed for sins of ours, punished that we might have peace, scourged for our healing, and the object on whom fell in concentrated weight the iniquity (the sin with its guilt and consequences) of us all—what can be plainer than this accumulation of statement? Is there any worthy explanation other than the recognition that the prophet declares the sufferings of the Servant to be the consequence of the people's sins? Whether we regard His bearing of these to include their removal or simply their endurance, there can be no doubt that the innocence of the sufferer is contrasted with the estimate of His guilt formed by falsely judging men, nor that His sufferings are represented as, in the fullest sense, vicarious. The Hebrew puts emphasis in verse 5 on the possessive pronouns "our," and brings them into contrast with the emphatic "He." But not only did He suffer by reason of others' sins, but His sufferings had power to redeem and deliver. Such strange virtue was in His chastisement or punishment that it secured peace for us sinners. So effectual were the strokes which fell on Him that His wounds were our healing. Here is the great wonder which is set forth by these significant juxtapositions of "He" and "we," "our" and "His." The sin with its consequences which was ours becomes, by some undisclosed mystery of love and power, His, and the bruises, chastisements and stripes that were His become, by some undisclosed mystery of efficacy and unity, the reasons for our peace and health. *A. M.*

It is by Christ's *suffering* for sins that we, in some manner, are delivered from sin. It is by His *death* that we are made to live. His teachings

were of superhuman wisdom and authority ; His example was of spotless perfection ; but it is His bitter passion, His tasting of death, His cross, which are everywhere set forth—whether in the Old Testament, in the form of the bleeding lamb, or in the New Testament, in the form of didactic statement—as the one reason and method of man's restoration. *W. Adams.*

If Christ will pluck away eternal judgment for the world, He must bleed for it. So great a salvation must tear a passage into the world by some tragic woe—without shedding of blood there is no remission. This blood—oh, it is this that has a purifying touch, working lustrally, as the Divine word conceives, on all the stains of our sin, washing us, making us clean, sprinkling even our evil conscience. This tragic power of the cross takes hold, in other words, of all that is dullest, and hardest, and most intractable, in our sin, and moves our palsied nature, all through, in mighty throbs of life. And this is Christianity ; meeting us just where we most require to be met. Christ is a great bringer on for us because He suffers for us. Christianity is a mighty salvation because it is a tragic salvation. With a fall and an overspreading curse at the beginning, and a cross in the middle, and a glory and shame at the end, where souls struggle out, through perils, and pains, and broken chains, or bear their chains away unbroken still and still to be—how moving, and mighty, and high must be the sentiment of it ! Oh, how grandly harrowing is that joy, how tremulous in tragic excitement is that song of ascription, roaring as a sea-surge round the throne—"unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood !" *H. B.*

5. By His stripes. How literally this was applicable to the Lord Jesus it is unnecessary to attempt to prove. This could not be mere conjecture. How could Isaiah, seven hundred years before it occurred, conjecture that the Messiah would be *scourged and bruised* ? It is this *particularity* of prediction compared with the literal fulfilment which furnishes the fullest demonstration that the prophet was inspired. In the prediction nothing is *vague* and *general*. Nothing has the aspect of mere conjecture. All is particular and minute, as if he saw what was done and was describing a real transaction, and the description is as minutely accurate as if he was describing what was actually occurring before his eyes. *Barnes.*

Yes, "by His stripes we are healed." It is not a question of words and names, but of Divine realities, of a mystery of righteousness

and love, not too dim for us to adore. He, our God and our Second Adam, whose representative Headship was real through one of His natures, and infinitely efficacious through the other, stood in our place, as our Sin-offering, and by a Passion both physical and spiritual inflicted on Him as our substitute, made satisfaction to the claims of Divine justice, and harmonized its action with that of Divine mercy. So much we can see through a glass darkly ; enough to guide each Christian's life, enough to illuminate his death. *Bp. Jeune.*

6. Our sin is charged upon us collectively in common : "we have all gone astray." Distributively : "every one to his own way." We all agree in turning aside from the right way of pleasing and enjoying of God ; and we disagree, as each one hath a by-path of his own, some running after this lust, some after that, and so are not only divided from God, but divided from one another, while every one maketh his will his law. *T. Manton.*

Laid on Him. *He was human—He was Divine.* In His own person was the tangential point between the two natures which sin had sundered. Immediately related was He to the parties between whom reconciliation needs to be effected. He shared the nature of both. He was the mediator between God and man—man's advocate, priest, intercessor, representative and God's image and representative too. He was the God-man. *W. Adams.*

"The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all," that He might Himself bear it. The result of His bearing it is given in this passage so far forth as respects the welfare of His people. It is under God the means of their salvation. His chastisement brings their peace ; His stripes, their healing. His being bruised suffices instead of their suffering the penalty of their own sins. The same views are reiterated in the words (verse 8), "For the transgression of My people was He stricken ;" and (verse 10), "When His soul shall make a sin offering ;" and (verse 11), "By the knowledge of Himself shall the righteous one, My servant, insure justification to many, for He shall bear their iniquities ;" and (verse 12) where His magnificent spoils of victory appear as His reward for pouring out His soul even unto death, and for His "bearing the sins of many." We cannot be too grateful for these amplified, varied and yet marvellously coincident and unanimous declarations to the effect of *vicarious atonement*—Christ suffering *for* His people, to make the free pardon of their sins possible without peril to the majesty of the law they have broken. And

here it cannot be said too emphatically that these numerous, various, yet equivalent forms of expression are all borrowed from the Hebrew sacrificial system, and therefore must be interpreted in the light of that system. They all assume that this great system was instituted of God for the purpose of illustrating to the human mind the vital law of God's kingdom, that suffering must first be borne by some innocent being *for the guilty* before he can be forgiven. God requires some adequate expression to be made of His displeasure against sin before it is safe for Him to pardon. He must not give the least occasion to His moral subjects to suppose Him indifferent to their sinning. The infliction of suffering is the natural even if not the only possible means by which He can express His abhorrence of sin and His regard for law and obedience. Hence in this great illustrative sacrificial system, the Lord selected those animals which best personify innocence, gentleness, meekness—*e.g.*, lambs, goats, heifers, bullocks, doves; and made them the symbols of the suffering, atoning "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." They must die; their blood must be poured forth publicly, solemnly, in sacred symbol; and then be sprinkled upon the guilty, or upon the altar before God. So those animals bore the sins of the people. The system does imply to a certain degree a transfer of suffering from the one who deserved to another who did not deserve it; or in other words, the actual endurance of suffering even unto death by some innocent being as a condition precedent to pardon for the guilty—precedent, that is, to the actual taking away of sin, considered as a fact which in the eye of law demands God's displeasure and His infliction of penalty. Such is the sense required for this class of terms in this chapter, by the genius and the varied phraseology of the Hebrew sacrificial system. It should be added also that the New Testament sustains this view most amply, showing—*e.g.*, that "the Son of man came to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20 : 28); "Who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2 : 6); "who is the Lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world" (John 1 : 29); "who His ownself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, by whose stripes we are healed" (1 Pet. 2 : 21).

II. C.

All other sin offerings were only types and shadows of Christ's; that which He offered by offering Himself was the substance, the true and real sacrifice, which expiated the sins of the world; indeed, the chief end of all the sac-

rifices of the Jews was to put them in mind of that which Christ was to offer for them; and so to give them occasion to exercise their faith, and put their confidence in Him for pardon and salvation. *Bp. Beveridge.*—And this is the grand foundation of the Christian's confidence, that he has a High Priest who filleth all things; one of a Divine nature and dignity; one who, instead of all other sacrifices, offered Himself as the end and crown of all; by Himself He purged our sins, not by the blood of animal victims; other priests offered first for themselves; but He had no need, being "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." They were ever changing, they followed each other like shadows, and they were but shadows, He the eternal substance; their offerings had no virtue of their own to remove an atom of guilt; His one offering of Himself, once for all, has forever perfected them that are sanctified. *R. Hall.*

In 1 Cor. 15 : 3 Paul tells us "that *Christ* died," not *Jesus*. It is a great truth, that the man, our Brother, Jesus, passed through the common lot, but that is not what Paul says here, though he often says it. What he says is that "*Christ* died." Christ is the name of an office, into which is condensed a whole system of truth, declaring that it is He who is the Apex, the Seal, and ultimate Word of all Divine revelation. It was the *Christ* that died; unless it was, the death of Jesus is no gospel. "He died for our sins." Now, if the apostle had only said "He died for us," that might conceivably have meant that, in a multitude of different ways of example, appeal to our pity and compassion and the like, His death was of use to mankind. But when he says "He died *for our sins*," I take leave to think that that expression has no meaning, unless it means that He died as the expiation and sacrifice for men's sins. In what intelligible sense could Christ "die for our sins" unless He died as bearing their punishment and as bearing it for us? And then, finally, "He died and rose . . . according to the Scriptures," fulfilling the Divine purposes revealed from of old. To the fact that a man was crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem, "and rose again the third day," which is the narrative, there are added these three things—the dignity of the Person, the purpose of His death, the fulfilment of the Divine intention manifested from of old. And these three things turn the narrative into a gospel. *A. M.*

The death of Christ may be described as an *expiation* for sin, for it was a Divine act which

renders the punishment of sin unnecessary. It was a representative death. It may be described as a ransom. It was a satisfaction to the righteousness of God. It was a sacrifice for sin. It was a propitiation for sin. *R. W. Dale.*—The very nature and essence of the sufferings and death of Christ is that they are an expiation for sin. This is the very idea of a sacrifice. It is its exhaustive definition. It is the thing itself, and not a deduction or inference from it. This is the fact and not a theory about it. *H. B. Smith.*

We shall never understand the royalty of Jesus unless we begin with His sufferings, nor shall we understand His sufferings unless we see them in the light of that awful but most blessed word, "The Lord hath made to light on Him the iniquity of us all." No cross, no crown, is as true for the master as for His servants. A Christ who did not die for sinners, and bear their sins in His own body on the tree, is an impotent Christ, whose death is of no moment, and followed by no sway over hearts. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." That is not true unless the death be the sacrifice for the world's sin. Then, and only then, is its issue dominion over souls redeemed, and enthronement by the Father's side, with the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession and His enemies for His footstool, and all power wielded in the hands that bear the print of the nails. "He was wounded for transgression of ours." Therefore He is our King and our Lord. He bore on His meek head the sins of us all. Therefore God crowns Him, and we should crown Him, Lord of all. *A. M.*

Jesus often declared that He was under this law of sacrifice. He must give His life for men in labor and suffering, and finally in the death on the cross, before He could be glorified. This was the necessity to which Divine love had subjected Him. His dying for men took its solemn meaning from the fact that He had lived for them. He was giving His life every day of His ministry in a sense far deeper than we have ever fully fathomed yet. He gave the things that really make up life—His sympathy, His personal influence and the helpful offices of love and kindness. Sacrifice is the fruit of love, and it is the nature of love to give. The essence of sacrifice, therefore, is giving. It cannot be deprivation or loss, as some suppose, else God would be incapable of sacrificial love, since He is not capable of deprivation or loss. He who loves, gives. God

is the greatest giver, since He loves most, and this giving is sacrificial. His greatest gift to the world is the life of Jesus in humanity, whose law was the law of sacrifice. "God so loved the world that He gave," is the keynote of all that the Gospel teaches of the sacrifice of God in Christ. *G. B. Stevens.*

The one grand central fact which makes the Christian system the supreme and gracious "power" that it is, is God *giving Himself* to men. It is Infinite Love stirring itself and reaching out to our race, voluntary, unprompted, unsought, unbought, unbargained for. Even human love, in all our common habitations, has this for its secret charm, the mystical beauty of its blessing, that it *gives* itself. Love takes of its own and puts it away, parting with it at whatever cost or pain to itself for the good of some other soul. All the interchanges of unselfish affection and friendly sacrifice which play to and fro between one heart and another, ranging down in their celestial order from the archangel to the slave, have the "Word made flesh," and crucified for their source and pattern. That was the fountain gift—unpurchased grace. The coarse cradle, the homeless years in Galilee, the Sermon on that mount which became the pulpit of all centuries, the parables which illuminated the whole natural world with supernatural significations, the miracles of patient gentleness which sought to break open by acts of mercy to men's bodies a pathway to a better healing for their disordered souls, the agonies of the garden, the opening of the gates of the everlasting morning on the third day—these are only the magnificent particulars of the one inestimable *Free Gift*. Christianity is gratuity, through and through. *F. D. H.*

Verses 7-9. The third section sets forth the patient silence of the sufferer. Here the prophet speaks. The "we" does not occur, but we hear of "My people." First, the silent submission of the sufferer is set forth, with a pathos which has touched the hearts of all generations, by the two aspects of the one figure of the lamb. It is "led to the slaughter" unresisting. So He willingly yields to violence and death. It lets itself be shorn without a bleat. So He accepts all suffering without a murmur, and is silent, not in obstinacy, but submission. *A. M.*—The submission is as complete as the suffering is unfathomable. Here, for the first time, sin is deplored, judged—condemned by the human conscience as God judges and condemns it; for the pain of sin is endured with full acquiescence in the holy will of Him who

has inflicted it. This is what constitutes the cost of this sacrifice; it is not the amount of suffering which is included in it, it is the spirit in which this suffering has been accepted and borne. In it God has received the most perfect homage offered to His holiness; and if, in consideration of this offering, He now gives pardon, such pardon would not tend to the increase of sin upon the earth. Where pardon is received, it can have no other effect than the rapture of the will with sin, or, as the apostle says, death to sin. Consequently it is here that God meets all hearts which desire, at the same time, peace and holiness, reconciliation with Him and the destruction of sin, the removal of condemnation and the agreement of their will with the Divine will. *Godet.*

7. As a lamb which is led to be killed is patient and silent, so was He. "As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so was He." He made no resistance. He uttered no complaint. He suffered Himself to be led quietly along to be put to death. What a striking and beautiful description! How tender and how true! We can almost see here the meek and patient Redeemer led along without resistance; and amid the multitude that were assembled with various feelings to conduct Him to death, Himself perfectly silent and composed. With all power at His disposal, yet as quiet and gentle as though He had no power; and with a perfect consciousness that He was going to die, as calm and as gentle as though He were ignorant of the design for which they were leading Him forth. This image occurs also in Jeremiah (11:19), "but I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter." *Barnes.*

Verses 8 and 9 present many difficulties, but, on the whole, the general drift is clear. The hideous prostitution of the forms of justice to murder is declared as the agency which slew the patient sufferer. "By oppression and judgment"—that is, by oppression which assumed the guise of a judicial act—"He was taken." That is a summary of all the parody of forms of judicial procedure in Christ's passion. And sad and passing strange was the fact that, of all the multitudes of contemporaries who saw the meek beauty of His life, not one comprehended why He died, or read the open secret of His vicarious sufferings. The blindness of those who stand beside the world's great ones reached its tragic climax when the Lamb of God was slain. *A. M.*

8. *And as for His generation* [the body of His contemporaries, the mass of those who

were living at the time] *who among them considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of My people as a curse for them?* The rendering here given is that of Dr. Alexander, which is also substantially that of Dr. Dillmann. It agrees with that of the American Appendix in making the entire clause one continuous sentence, which renders the sense clearer, and differs from it simply in preferring a direct to a relative construction of the closing words, "to whom the stroke was due." The rendering of these words in the Revised Version, adopted from the Authorized Version, "was He stricken," assumes an unusual and doubtful form of the Hebrew pronoun. The generation that witnessed the crucifixion, or heard of it at the time, failed to comprehend that this was a vicarious death suffered by Him to make atonement for the transgressions of the true people of God, who obtain salvation by His cross. The margin of the Revised Version, "and His life who shall recount?" puts a meaning upon the words which they will not bear; while the text of the Authorized Version, "who shall declare His generation?" introduces a thought foreign to the passage, whether the reference be to His miraculous birth or to His eternal pre-existence. *W. H. G.*

9. *And they made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich* [American Appendix, *a rich man*] *in His death.* By a striking providence, a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, provided Him an honorable burial in his own rock-hewn tomb (Matt. 27:57-60). The close coincidence between prophecy and fact, in points so far beyond the range of human sagacity, may well confound gainsayers, and put sceptical critics upon their sharpest devices to break its force. The reason assigned for this honor in His burial is His innocence. *H. C.*

It was intended to cast the highest possible indignity on the Messiah; not only to put Him to death, but even to deny Him the privilege of an honorable burial, and to commit Him to the same grave with the wicked. How remarkably was this fulfilled! As a matter of course, since He was put to death with wicked men, He would naturally have been buried with them, unless there had been some special interposition in His case. He was given up to be treated as a criminal; He was made to take the vacated place of a murderer—Barabbas—on the cross; He was subjected to the same indignity and cruelty to which they were; He died in the same manner; and it was evidently designed also that He should be buried in the same man-

ner, and probably in the same grave. Thus in John 19 : 31 it is said that the Jews, because it was the preparation, in order that their bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath day, "besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away;" intending evidently that they should be treated alike; that their death should be hurried in the same cruel manner; and that they should be buried in the same way. Who can but wonder at the striking accuracy of the prediction! *And with the rich* in His death. The sense here is, that after His death He should be with a man of wealth, but without determining anything in regard to His moral character. The exact fulfilment of this may be seen in the account which is given of the manner of the burial of the Saviour by Joseph of Arimathea. Joseph was a rich man. He begged the body of Jesus. He took the body, and wound it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, a tomb hewn out of rock—that is, a grave designed for himself; such as a rich man would use; and where it was designed that a rich man should be laid. He was embalmed with myrrh and aloes "about a hundred pound weight," in the mode in which *the rich* were usually interred. How different this from the interment of malefactors! How different from the way in which He would have been buried if He had been interred with them as it had been designed! And how striking and minutely accurate this prophecy in circumstances which could not *possibly* have been the result of conjecture! How *could* a pretended prophet, seven hundred years before the event occurred, conjecture of one who was to be executed as a malefactor and with malefactors, and who would in the ordinary course of events be buried *with* malefactors—how *could* he conjecture that he would be rescued from such an ignominious burial by the interposition of a rich man, and buried in a grave designed for a man of affluence and in the manner in which the wealthy are buried? *Barnes.*

10. Here begins the account of the Messiah's exaltation. All the previous sufferings were to have an end in the erection of God's kingdom upon earth. A.—The death of Christ, regarded with reference to the human actors in this deed of blood, was an act of criminal violence and injustice; but viewed with reference to the Divine counsel and the gracious design of the Lord Jesus, it was the ransom price of the world's redemption—it was the atoning sacrifice by which the pardon of sin and everlasting life were secured for all the children of

God. "Therefore doth My Father love Me," said the Saviour, "because I lay down My life for My sheep." It was in this sense that it pleased the Lord to bruise His incarnate Son—not that He took pleasure in His sufferings, but in the work of redemption which He was thus effecting. W. H. G.

The transcendent worth of that obedience which Christ rendered, or that oblation which He offered, the power which it possessed of counterbalancing a world's sin, lay in this, that He who offered these, while He bore a human nature, was a Divine person; not God only, for as such He would never have been in the condition to offer; nor as man only, for then the work of His offering could never have reached so far; but that He was God and man in one person indissolubly united, and in this person performing all those acts—man, that He might obey and suffer and die, God that He might add to every act of His obedience, of His suffering, of His death an immeasurable worth, steeping in the glory of His Divine personality all of human that He wrought. Christ was able so summarily to pay one debt, because He had another and a higher coin in which to pay it than that in which it had been contracted. It was contracted in the currency of earth; He paid it in the currency of heaven. *Trench.*

He shall see His seed. The ultimate thought of the verse is that because the Messiah gave up His life as a sin offering, He shall be rewarded with a people indefinitely numerous and a reign of peace and love indefinitely vast and glorious, in all which the Father will rejoice, for this is His pleasure, and this work shall therefore prosper in Messiah's hand. Hengstenberg has well said that this "*seed*" are the many nations whom He shall sprinkle (52 : 15); the same whom He takes as His spoil (53 : 12); whom He justifies (verse 11), and for whom He intercedes (verse 12). H. C.—The sublime joy which is to fill and replenish the mind of Christ is to issue from the success of His redemptive work. That work is emphatically "*the pleasure of the Lord*," not merely His *will*, His determined *purpose*, but the object on which He looks with supremest complacency, and from which He draws a Divine delight! In this respect, in the gathering of a great and peculiar joy from the work of salvation, the Father and the Son are One. *Binney.*

11. The only satisfactory construction is the passive one which makes the phrase mean *by the knowledge of Him* upon the part of others; and this is determined by the whole connection

to mean practical, experimental knowledge, involving faith and a self-appropriation of the Messiah's righteousness, the effect of which is then expressed in the following words. All mistake and doubt as to the nature of the justification here intended, or of the healing mentioned in chap. 52 : 15, is precluded by the addition of the words, *and He shall bear their iniquities*. The introduction of the pronoun makes a virtual antithesis, suggesting the idea of exchange or mutual substitution. *They* shall receive His righteousness, and *He* shall bear their burdens. A.

Guilt and ill desert are personal qualities, and cannot be transferred from one to another. The transgressor alone is ill deserving and blameworthy. But the *consequences* of guilt may pass over to another; the *sufferings* which would be a proper expression of the evil of sin may be assumed by another. And this was done by the Redeemer. He suffered in the place of sinners, and for their sake. *He stood between the stroke of justice and the sinner, and received the blow Himself*. He *intercepted*, so to speak, the descending sword of justice that would have cut the sinner down, and thus saved him. He thus bore their iniquities. It is in connection with this that men become justified; and it is only by the fact that He has thus borne their iniquities that they can be regarded as righteous in the sight of a holy God. It is not by any merit of theirs; not by any work of righteousness which they have done; it is only by His merits, and by the righteousness which He has thus wrought out for them. He endured the consequences or results of sin; we partake of the consequences or the results of His sufferings and death in our behalf. This is the great cardinal doctrine of justification; the peculiarity of the Christian scheme; the glorious plan by which lost men may be saved, and by which the guilty may become pardoned and be raised up to endless life and glory. *Barnes*.

Out of this death of scorn and agony come fruits of magnificent reward; the knowledge of Him avails to *justify many* because He has borne their iniquities. He sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied. The salvation of a great multitude that no man can number is His everlasting glory! II. C.—The number of the saved is represented in Scripture as so exceedingly great that even Christ Himself at the last, with all His mighty love for sinners, is satisfied. All this immense multitude redeemed from among men owe all their salvation, all

their happiness and glory, to one sacrifice only, one offering once offered, "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The blood of Jesus Christ it describes as so efficacious, so precious, that its virtue extends to all believing sinners in all ages of the world. *C. Bradley*. —Estimate the throngs who shall grace the Saviour's triumph when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, and behold the fulfilment of the inspired promise, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Measure, if you can, the tides of joy which shall flow through the Redeemer's breast forever. *B. B. E.*

12. Poured out His soul unto death. It can never be forgotten, without a dismemberment of the living gospel, that Jesus Christ "laid down" His own life. No man had power to take it from Him. He offered it because it was for this purpose He came into the world. His death was as diverse from ours as His life was superior to ours. It was not an accident or fortune, but the completion of His priestly office. His self-surrender to His foes was not suicide, but sacrifice. To say that He lived our complete exemplar is to tell but one half the story; He died as one who came "to make atonement for the sins of the people." It is not before the completion of that sacrificial work, as Paul says, but after it that "being reconciled to God by the death of His Son, we shall be saved by His life." *Interior*.

Our dear Lord, when He died, died because He *willed* to do so. He was man, and therefore He *could* die; but He was not man in such fashion as that He *must* die. In His bodily frame was the possibility, not the necessity, of death. And that being so, the very fact of His death is the most signal proof that He is Lord of death as well as of life. He dies not because He *must*, He dies not because of faintness and pain and wounds. These and they who inflicted them had no power at all over Him. He chooses to die; and He wills it because He wills to fulfil the eternal purpose of Divine love, which is His purpose, and to bring life to the world. His hour of weakness was His hour of strength. They lifted Him on a cross, and it became a throne. In the moment when death seemed to conquer Him, He was really using it that He might abolish it. When He gave up the ghost, He showed Himself Lord of death as marvellously and as gloriously as when He burst its bands and rose from the grave. Thou didst overcome the sharpness of death when Thou didst willingly bow Thy

head to it, and didst die, not because Thou *must*, but because Thou *wouldst*. A. M.

It is a throne of honor to which our Saviour is raised ; a throne of honor to which heaven and earth and hell do and must bow. The sun hides his awful head, the earth trembles, the rocks rend, the graves open and all the frame of nature doth homage to their Lord in this secret but Divine pomp of His crucifixion. And while ye think His feet and hands despicably fixed, behold, He is powerfully trampling upon hell and death and setting up trophies of His most glorious victory, and scattering everlasting crowns and sceptres unto all believers. *Bp. H.*

At last it came, that hour so awful, when on the head of the only righteous One, the Lord made to meet the sins of us all ; and beneath the first feeling of the burden His soul grew sorrowful even unto death. It was not merely that the prophet sealed His testimony with His blood, but the Priest became a Victim, and in order to earn His crown, the King of saints became the King of martyrs. He laid down His life for the sheep, He made His soul an offering, and to the types and shadows of a thousand years gave significance, and to every troubled conscience strong consolation, by shedding that blood, without which there could have been no remission, but which, now that it is shed, insures a cleansing from all and any sin. Come and see Him—see Him in our place, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities—see Him drinking our cup and paying our penalty—see Him in the death-grapple with our enemies, vanquishing the devil, but apparently carried captive by the grave—see Him disarming even this grim enemy, and ascending most glorious on high—see Him there, a Priest upon His throne, dispensing the dearly purchased pardons, the repentance and remission—see Him still the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, and hearken to the adoring hosts of heaven as they cry, " Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing ! " *Hamilton.*

The cross is the throne of the King. A sacrificial death is the true work of the Messiah of law, prophecy and psalm ; and because He did not come down from the cross, therefore is He crowned with glory and honor in heaven, and rules over grateful and redeemed hearts on earth. The midday darkness was nature divinely draped in mourning over the sin of sins, the most tragic of deaths. It was a symbol of

the eclipse of the Light of the world ; but ere He died it passed, and the sun shone on His expiring head, in token that His death scattered the darkness and poured day on our sad night. The solemn silence was broken at last by that loud cry, the utterance of strangely blended consciousness of possession of God and abandonment by Him, the depths of which we can never fathom. But this we know, that our sins, not His, wove the veil which separated Him from His God. Such separation is the real death. Where cold analysis is out of place, reverent gratitude may draw near. Let us adore, for what we can understand speaks of a love which has taken the iniquity of us all on itself. Let us silently adore, for all words are weaker than that mystery of love. A. M.—Calvary is holy ground, and we must take the shoes from our feet. We can only admire and adore. There never was witnessed such a scene in the universe before—the infinite holiness and goodness of God sounded to their depths, the whole moral energy of the Godhead in action. Well might the angels stoop from their heights and desire to look into this mystery ; well might there be silence, the silence of profound admiration, in heaven ; well might the sun be darkened, the earth convulsed and the very dead startled, when moral elements were at work on a scale of infinite grandeur before which the earth, the sea and the sky, and all material things, dwindle into littleness as mirrors of the glory of God. *Thornwell.*

Christ's Character and Sacrifice the only Moving Power with Men. Outside the character revealed in Christ, apart from His act of costly sacrifice, there is no power in all that God is or has done to stir the soul to its depths, to awaken true gratitude, to subdue and melt the heart to penitence and love. For these effects all that God has done *beside* has ever been in vain. The constant miracle of the circling hosts of heaven, of the procession of seasons and harvests upon the earth have wrought no transforming change in man's gazing soul. The sense of obligation that God has impressed upon man's conscience through the law proclaimed on Sinai, the actual, terrible judgments with which in all time He has visited individuals, nations and the race, and the abundant kindly providences that He has scattered along the path of men in every generation, have all utterly failed to influence the human heart to submission and trust, or to stay the broad tide of human corruption. Resisted, forgotten or unheeded all ! Only *Christ crucified*, revealing God in *sacrifice*, has proved a power adequate

to reach, impress, subdue the human heart. The infinite God, suffering for man, voluntarily substituting Himself a sacrifice that man might not suffer the just due of sin, revealing thus to man by the immensity of the sacrifice, as nought beside could reveal, the inherent greatness of the soul, the vastness of its guilt and the fearfulfulness of the consequences of that guilt unpardoned, unremoved; revealing, too, a measure of love exceeding all thought, this it is which constitutes Christ the power of God, and this is the only adequate power of God Himself, to move human hearts to grief and trust and love. It was the vision of the crucified Son of God that broke down the proud, self-righteous spirit of the persecuting Saul and transformed him into the humble, loving, fervent preacher of the cross. The same vision of God in sacrifice for man, realized by faith, has wrought with similar transforming power, alike upon the few great souls chosen of God in successive generations to lead in the mighty movements of His Spirit, and upon the many who, in narrower, unknown spheres, have lived the life of faith in the Son of God and gone to their reward. The finished record of *every* saintly life, whether written or unwritten, testifies to this power of the cross of Christ as the only power of God to salvation, the only power that has subdued the unloving, unrenewed heart to childlike trust and love. And the history of Christ's living ones to-day furnishes the same testimony, shows that the heart-melting, renewing power lies in the conviction wrought by the vision of the cross, the conviction of each uplooking soul, that Christ "loved me and gave Himself for me." B.

Scriptural experience of sin, of its turpitude, of its guilt and of its power as an indwelling principle in our nature has never found moral equilibrium save in the sacrificial work of Christ. With every revival of religion, and in constant proportion to the depth and power of the prevalent religious experience, this doctrine of a blood-bought salvation has always been the more sharply emphasized in the prayers, the hymns and the expressed thoughts of God's people. The cross as the meeting-place of infinite justice and love, as the fountain of inexhaustible streams of life and righteousness effected by sacrificial blood, has been the inspiration of all the heroic living and doing of the distinctively Christian type which has appeared in the course of human history. A. A. Hodge.

It is not easy to found a religion. It was not easy two thousand years ago, with Judaism

and Greek philosophy and Roman law in possession of the world. But it was done. Jerusalem and Athens and the Eternal City surrendered. The cross and the open sepulchre mastered them. The barbaric nations were tamed into gentleness and loving loyalty, and upon the foundations of that ancient faith have been raised the walls of modern Christendom, dominant in Europe and America, and circling the globe with its missionary enterprise. The scorn of its foes has not withered its life nor have the unseemly contentions of its friends broken its power. How comes it? Because behind its creeds and sacraments, radiant and clear, rises the figure of the Christ of Bethlehem and Olivet, risen from the dead, regnant in the heavens, the incarnate Son of God. And upon the seas of modern controversy I see His pierced feet treading their wildness into eternal peace.

Behrends.

Starr King, one of the most eloquent champions of the Socinians, paid the following tribute to the doctrine of the vicarious atonement: "It is embodied by the holiest of memories, as it has been consecrated by the loftiest talent of Christendom. It fired the fierce eloquence of Tertullian in the early Church, and gushed in honeyed periods from the lips of Chrysostom; it enlisted the life-long zeal of Athanasius to keep it pure; the sublimity of it fired every power, and commanded all the resources of the mighty soul of Augustine; the learning of Jerome and the energy of Ambrose were committed to its defence; it was the text for the subtle eye and analytic thought of Aquinas; it was the pillar of Luther's soul, toiling for man; it was shapen into intellectual proportions and systematic symmetry by the iron logic of Calvin; it inspired the beautiful humility of Fénélon; fostered the devotion and self-sacrifice of Oberlin; flowed like molten metal into the rigid forms of Edwards's intellect, and kindled the deep and steady rapture of Wesley's heart. All the great enterprises of Christian history have been born from the influence, immediate or remote, which the vicarious theory of redemption has exercised upon the mind and heart of humanity."

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The central miracle of Scripture and of all history is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. If there were not a single Gospel account of the fact, we should be compelled to believe it, on the testimony of the apostles in their preaching, and on the universal faith of the early and the persecuted Church. The

preaching of the apostles, in the lifetime of eye-witnesses, was very largely of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and no one can explain that preaching, nor the existence, the growth under severe trials, the faith, the unity, the persistence through ages of the living Church, without admitting the literal reality of the original and central miracle of the Christian system. We could not account for the inscriptions in the earliest tombs, nor for the lofty strains of the earliest hymns, if the resurrection of Christ was a myth. The martyr-faith would have been simply impossible. *Packard.*

The resurrection carried along with it a triple proof of the divinity of our Lord's mission. It was the fulfilment of a prophecy, as well as the working of a miracle; that miracle wrought, and that prophecy fulfilled, in answer to a solemn and confident appeal made beforehand by Christ to this event as the crowning testimony to His Messiahship. In His resurrection the seal of the Divine acceptance and approval was put upon that great work of service and of sacrifice, of atonement and of obedience in our room and stead, which Jesus finished on the cross. *Hanna.*

With the resurrection stands or falls Christ's *whole work for our redemption*. If He died, like other men, then we have no proof that the cross was anything but a martyr's cross. His resurrection is the proof of His completed work of redemption. It is the proof—followed as it is by His ascension—that His death was not the tribute which for Himself He had to pay, but the ransom for us. His resurrection is the condition of His present activity. If He has not risen, He has not put away sin; and if He has not put it away by the sacrifice of Himself, none has, and it remains. We come back to the old dreary alternative: if Christ be not risen, your faith is vain, and our preaching is vain. Ye are yet in your sins, and they which have fallen asleep in Christ with unfulfilled hopes fixed upon a baseless vision—they of whom we hoped, through our tears, that they live with Him—they are perished. For, if He be not risen, there is no resurrection; and if He be not risen, there is no forgiveness; and if He be not risen, there is no Son of God; and the world is desolate, and the heaven is empty, and the grave is dark, and sin abides, and death is eternal. If Christ be dead, then that awful vision is true, "As I looked up into the immeasurable heavens for the Divine Eye, it froze me with an empty bottomless eye socket." There is nothing between us and darkness, de-

spair, death, but that ancient message, "I declare unto you the Gospel which I preach, by which ye are saved if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was raised the third day according to the Scriptures." Well, then, may we take up the ancient glad salutation, "The Lord is risen;" and turning from these thoughts of the disaster and despair that that awful supposition drags after it, fall back upon the sober certainty, and with the apostle break forth in triumph, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." *A. M.*

Jesus Christ, risen from His grave—arrayed in His glorious manhood—is seated on the throne of heaven. He is the mid-point—the centre of the great empire of living souls. He is in communication, constant and intimate, with myriads of beings to whom, by His death, and by His triumph over death, and by His enduring and exhaustless life, He is made wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Yes, to believe in the risen Jesus is to live beneath a sky which is indeed bright. This is to believe that He is alive forevermore, and that He has the keys of hell and of death. *Liddon.*

I have been used for many years to study the history of other times and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and *I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God hath given us, that Christ died and rose again from the dead.* *T. Arnold.*

Made intercession for transgressors. The acceptance of His offering is made the basis of His heavenly intercession. It is this which is made the premise of that grand chapter in Hebrews when we are told that "now once in the end of the world hath He appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself;" and therefore He has entered "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." It is not the cradle of Bethlehem, but the cross of Calvary which gives Him His standing as our Advocate before the throne. *Interior.*—When we are bid to consider the "High Priest of our profession," our thoughts are pointed back to the one great act by which Christ "hath offered one sacrifice for sins forever," and up to the continuous work which, with ever-ready sympathy and ever-prevalent intercession, He carries on in the heavens, pre-

senting there His Eternal Sacrifice, preparing a place for us because He is there, and sending down on us the fulness of the gifts which are His that they may be ours. The central point of our meditation and of our faith in the work of Christ is His Sacrifice and Intercession. He has come forth from the Father—His messenger to men; He has gone to the Father—our priest and forerunner with God. By both offices He completes His merciful mediation—the Christ whom it is our life and blessedness to set ever before us is the Christ who, Son of God, lived that He might declare God to men; and, Son of Man, died, that He might reconcile men to God—and Son of God, and Son of Man, ever liveth that He may pour heaven's gifts upon earth, and at last lift earth's children to heaven. "Wherefore—consider Jesus Christ, our Apostle and High Priest." A. M.

Contrarieties Centred and Harmonized in Christ. Christ is called the Son of David, yet David calls Him Lord; He was understood to claim equality with the Father—as man He had not where to lay His head; He took part with flesh and blood, yet thought it not robbery to be equal with God; He took the form of a servant, yet His proper form was the form of God; He tabernacled in the flesh, yet came down from heaven; He said that He could of His own self do nothing, yet He is said to be the Lord of all; His mother is called Mary, yet He is over all, God blessed forever; He was born under the law and fulfilled the law, and yet in His own name gave a new and more perfect law, and brought in a new and everlasting righteousness; He was received into heaven out of the sight of His disciples, yet He is still with them, with any two or three of them always, and even to the ends of the earth; He was found in fashion as a man—and yet is the image of the invisible God; He hid not His face from shame and spitting, though He be the very brightness of the Father's glory; He increased in stature, yet is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; He increased in wisdom, yet knew the Father even as the Father knew Him; He died at the mandate of a Roman governor, yet is the Prince of the kings of the earth; He could say, "The Father is greater than I," yet also say, "I and My Father are one—he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father;" He said, in the time of His temptation, unto Satan, "It is written, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve,'" yet He also declared that all men should honor the Son even as they honor

the Father; and of Him it is asserted that every knee should bow to Him, and every tongue confess that He is God, to the glory of God the Father. *Henry B. Smith.*

This chapter proves that the Redeemer died as an atoning sacrifice for men. He was not a mere martyr, and He did not come and live merely to set us an example. How could it be said of any martyr that he bore our griefs, that he was bruised for our iniquities, that our sins were made to rush and meet upon him, and that he bare the sin of many? And if the purpose of His coming was merely to *teach* us the will of God, or to set us an example, why is such a prominence here given to His sufferings in behalf of others? Scarcely an allusion is made to His example; while the chapter is replete with statements of His sufferings and sorrows in behalf of others. It would be impossible to state in more explicit language the truth that He died as a sacrifice for the sins of men; that He suffered to make proper expiation for the guilty. No confession of faith on earth, no creed, no symbol, no standard of doctrine, contains more explicit statements on the subject. And if the language here used does not demonstrate that the Redeemer was an atoning sacrifice, it is impossible to conceive how such a doctrine could be taught or conveyed to men.

This whole chapter contains the most full, continuous statement in the Bible of the design of the Redeemer's sufferings and death. And after all the light which is shed on the subject in the New Testament; after all the full and clear statements made by the Redeemer and the apostles; still, if we wish to see a full and continuous statement on the great doctrine of the atonement, we naturally recur to this portion of Isaiah. If we wish our faith to be strengthened and our hearts warmed by the contemplation of His sufferings, we shall find no portion of the Bible better adapted to it than this. No man can study it too profoundly. No one can feel too much anxiety to understand it. Every verse, every phrase, every word, should be studied and pondered until it fixes itself deep in the memory, and makes an eternal impression on the heart. If a man understands this portion of the Bible, he will have a correct view of the plan of salvation. And it should be the subject of profound and prayerful contemplation till the heart glows with love to that merciful God who was willing to give the Redeemer to such sorrow, and to the gracious Saviour who for our sins was willing to pour out His soul unto death. *Barnes.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LIV.

54:1 SING, O barren, thou that didst not bear ; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child : for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitation ; spare not : lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes. For thou shalt spread abroad on the right hand and on the left ; and thy seed shall possess the nations, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. Fear not ; for thou shalt not be ashamed : neither be thou confounded ; for thou shalt not be put to shame : for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and the reproach of thy widowhood shalt thou remember no more. For thy Maker is thine husband ; the LORD of hosts is his name : and the Holy One of Israel is thy redeemer ; the God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the LORD hath called thee as a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even a wife of youth, when she is cast off, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee ; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In overflowing wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me : for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall my covenant of peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.

11 O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will set thy stones in fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy pinnacles of rubies, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy border of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD ; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established : thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear ; and from terror, for it shall not come near thee. Behold, they may gather together, but not by me : whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall because of thee. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the fire of coals, and bringeth forth a weapon for his work ; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper ; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgement thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness which is of me, saith the LORD.

Chap. 54. So soon as he has passed the hill of sorrow, his old rapturous emotions come upon him with twofold force, and no pæan in his prophecy is more joyous than the 54th chapter. It rings like a marriage bell. The true title, indeed, of Isaiah's prophecy is a "song." It is the "Song of Songs, which is Isaiah's," and many of its notes are only a little lower than those which saluted the birth of Christ, or welcomed Him from the tomb, with the burden, "He is risen, He is risen, and shall die no more !" *Giffilan.*

This chapter stands in the closest relations of thought with the two that immediately precede it. Chap. 52 contemplates Zion, the ancient Church, as coming forth from her quasi captivity under the bonds of the Mosaic dispensation into the glorious freedom of the Christian age ; the glad heralds of Gospel light announcing to her the coming of her Messiah ; from

which the prophet passes to speak somewhat fully of this "servant of the Lord" as winning immense and glorious reward by His sufferings and death. This reward lies in nations saved through His blood and by means of His revealed truth. Of course in this achievement of victory over the powers of sin and Satan, His people, "workers together with Him" and identified with Him in the deepest sympathy of their heart, must participate. Victory to Him is infinite joy to them. The gathering of His spoils (53:12) is the accumulation of converts within her tents and the filling of her solitudes with a teeming population. Upon this fact the chapter before us bears. After what has been said of the Messiah's triumph through suffering and of His seeing the travail of His soul, nothing could be more natural and legitimate than to pass next to consider the bearing of these achievements upon His Church and

people. Hence the prophet rushes into the midst of this sublimely magnificent theme, calling on Zion to break forth into song ; to enlarge her tents for these new accessions ; and to open heart, hand and home to these new comers. He assures her that her Maker is her husband, remembers her with undying love, and after temporary absence and alienation returns to her with everlasting mercies ; will rebuild her fallen walls with ineffable beauty and glory ; will teach all her children righteousness, and will ensure her against the weapons of her foes. H. C.

Instead of suffering from the loss of her national prerogatives, the Church shall be more glorious and productive than before (verse 1). Instead of being limited to a single nation, she shall be so extended as to take in all the nations of the earth (verses 2, 3). What seemed at first to be her forlorn and desolate condition shall be followed by a glorious change (verse 4). He who seemed once to be the God of the Jews only shall now be seen to be the God of the Gentiles also (verse 5). The abrogation of the old economy was like the repudiation of a wife, but its effects will show it to be rather a renewal of the conjugal relation (verse 6). The momentary rejection shall be followed by an everlasting reconciliation (verses 7, 8). The old economy, like Noah's flood, can never be repeated or renewed (verse 9). That was a temporary institution ; this shall outlast the earth itself (verse 10). The old Jerusalem shall be forgotten in the splendor of the new (verses 11, 12). But this shall be a spiritual splendor springing from a constant Divine influence (verse 13). Hence it shall also be a holy and a safe state (verse 14). All the enemies of the Church shall either be destroyed or received into her bosom (verse 15). The warrior and his weapons are alike God's creatures and at His disposal (verse 16). In every contest, both of hand and tongue, the Church shall be triumphant, not in her own right or her own strength, but in that of Him who justifies, protects and saves her (verse 17). A.

1. Zion, thought of as a wife and mother, the accessions to her in numbers being accounted as her children, has long been barren—that is, during those ages of spiritual decline and dearth which preceded the coming of Christ. Now the era of domestic joy returns. More are the children of her who has been desolate than falls to the common lot of the married wife. The Gospel age is to be distinguished by Pentecostal ingatherings and immense accessions from the Gentile nations. H. C.

2. Enlarge the place of thy tent.

The prophet announces the conversion of the Gentiles, in words addressed to the Jewish Church as the emblem of the Christian. The allusion here is to the tabernacle, and the image presented is an enlargement of the sacred tent to contain new crowds of worshippers ; the stakes are to be driven deep and firm ; the cords lengthened and tightened, that the sides of the tent may be able to support the pressure of the multitudes within it. (See Gen. 9 : 27, where Noah foretells the admission of worshippers of Japhet's stock into the tent of Shem.) W. Lowth.

5. In each clause the first member points out the relation of Jehovah to His people, while the second proclaims one of His descriptive names. He is related to the Church as her *Husband* and *Redeemer* ; He is known or shall be known to all mankind as the *Lord of Hosts* and as the *God of the whole earth*, which are not to be regarded as equivalent expressions. As the *Goel* of the Jewish institutions, the redeemer of a forfeited inheritance, was necessarily the next of kin, it is appropriately placed in opposition to the endearing name of husband ; and as the title Lord of Hosts imports a universal sovereignty, it is no less exactly matched with the God of the whole earth. A.—The magnificent thoughts of this verse are clothed in the richest poetical conceptions and in the finest style of Hebrew parallelism. The God who made thee is thy Husband, and He is truly the Lord of Hosts, God of the celestial armies, bearing this name only because He sustains these relations, and therefore the name well expresses the precious reality. Then essentially the same thoughts are put in new phrase and figure. Thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, their very Saviour, their dearest Friend, to be particularly appropriated by them as their own Holy One. He is also truly “the God of the whole earth,” and will evince Himself to be so by bringing the whole earth to know, accept, love and adore Him as their God. The Redeemer combined in Himself (Goel) most of the elements of a near and faithful friend, bound to make any possible sacrifices and efforts for the welfare of His brother. In this sense Jehovah appears here as the Redeemer as well as the Husband of His people.

6. The general sense of this verse is, The Lord hath called thee back into the relation of a wife again, after a temporary divorcement, in which state thou wast forsaken and heart-broken. The first word, “*for*,” indicates this logical connection ; thy Maker surely *is* thy Hus-

band, for He now invites thee to return into this relationship, despite of its suspension because of thy past sins. H. C.

7. For a small moment. God does not keep His anger against His people forever ; no, it is soon over ; as He is slow to anger, so He is swift to show mercy. The afflictions of God's people, as they are light, so they are but for a moment, a cloud that presently blows over. How sweet the returns of mercy would be to them, when God should come and comfort them according to the time that He afflicted them. God called them into covenant with Himself, then when they were forsaken and grieved ; He called them out of their afflictions, then when they were most pressing (verse 6). God's anger endures for a moment, but God will gather His people when they think themselves neglected ; will gather them out of their dispersions, that they may return in a body to their own land ; will gather them into His arms, to protect them, embrace them and bear them up ; and will gather them at last to Himself. H.

Sin disappears, as the mist before the sun, in the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus. The forgiveness of sins disperses the clouds of Divine wrath, even as the wind disperses the clouds of heaven. *Caspars.*

8. A thought so precious will bear to be reiterated and set forth in new and more resplendent light. This hiding of God's love is but temporary, only a transient outburst of displeasure, a sudden emotion which passed over in a moment ; while on the other hand His mercy and His kindness are everlasting. It is only a duration indefinitely long that can suffice to unfold the depth of God's loving-kindness to His chosen Zion. The ages of earth's years and centuries are therefore assigned for her triumph and peace in the presence and glory of her Divine Redeemer and Husband. H. C.

The wrath is little, but the mercies great ; the wrath for a moment, but the kindness everlasting. See how one is set over against the other, that we may neither despond under our afflictions nor despair of relief. If He hide His face from His own children, and suspend the wonted tokens of His favor, it is but in a little wrath, and for a small moment ; but He will "gather them with everlasting kindness" (Isa. 54 : 7, 8). As sure as the light of the morning returns after the darkness of the night, so sure will joy and comfort return, in a short time, in due time, to the people of God ; for the covenant of grace is as firm as the covenant of the day. This word has often been fulfilled to us

in the letter ; weeping has endured for a night, but the grief has been soon over, and the grievance gone. As long as God's anger continues, so long the saint's weeping continues ; but if that be but for a moment, the affliction is but for a moment, and when the light of God's countenance is restored, the affliction is easily pronounced light and momentary. H.

When God hides His face from His child, yet still He is a Father, and His heart is toward His child ; as Joseph, when he spake roughly to his brethren, and made them believe he would take them for spies ; still his heart was full of love, and he was fain to go aside and weep ; so God's bowels yearn to His children, when He seems to look strange. "In a little wrath I hid My face from thee, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee." Though God may have the look of an enemy, yet still He hath the heart of a father. *Watson.*

When the morning stars sang together, the "sisters of sorrow" were visible in the distant perspective, as servitors of the same cause for which Christ died. They stood locked hand in hand with the angels of Gethsemane. Never did a good man bear a throb of pain to which the heart of Christ was not responsive. Never does a great affliction fall upon a trusting believer which is not recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. *Phelps.*

How needful, amid the trials of this earthly life, and how blessed is it to look off from the low plane and past the near horizon of earth and time, to the higher, wider heavens, with their juster standards, and clearer lights, and unsetting glories, that thus we may learn to judge aright of the events around us, and of the influences that are passing over us. Earthly trial, however sharp and however long, is not hopeless, or endless, or even aimless, if accepted as the appointment of a parental providence, and as training and meeting us for rest in Jesus. And earthly splendors and lures grow tame and despicable, when, from the side-lights of Scripture, we learn to acknowledge what baits they often are and what fates they often work out. W. R. W.

Faith listens to the testimony of Jesus. The Lord thy Redeemer speaks : "My deserting thee is of the shortest duration, a moment, the twinkling of an eye ;" as no space of time compared to eternity. Then love vents itself and declares, "With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee." The word of the Lord shall stand. His covenant is sure, His love unchangeable, His promises immutable. Hence the soul is excited to confidence, to assurance—

yea, the fullest assurance of a God of truth, though all present appearances seem against it. Then hope dawns in the soul and love to Jesus is quickened. Holy shame and godly sorrow for past follies fill the heart, while the Comforter inwardly testifies of Jesus. His love, how infinite! His person, how precious! His promises, how reviving! His presence, how joyful! "Weeping may endure for a night" (of desertion), "but joy cometh in the morning" (of His presence). *W. Mason.*

9. The assurance of the preceding verse is now repeated in another form. There can no more be another such effusion of My wrath than there can be another deluge, here called the *waters of Noah*, just as we familiarly say "Noah's flood." The security in this case, as in that, is a Divine oath or solemn covenant, like that recorded in Gen. 8:21 and 9:11. The text mentions only one point of comparison between the two events—viz., that neither can occur again. The prophet does not say that God's displeasure with the Church is a flood which shall never be repeated, but that it shall never be repeated any more than the flood. A.

This must not be pressed to the extreme of saying that God will nevermore find anything in His Church to excite His displeasure or to call forth His rebuke. The declaration should be explained within its own limitations—no *such* period of darkness, displeasure and rebuke as that of the age before Christ came. The change from that state of things to the Christian age brought back the presence of God with His people and renewed their spiritual marriage covenant—never to be severed again. Dr. Alexander well remarks: "That this is not a general promise of security is plain from the fact that the Church has always been subjected to vicissitudes and fluctuations. Nor is there any period in her history to which it can properly be applied in a specific sense, except the change of dispensations which was made once for all, and can never be repeated. That the Church shall never again be brought under the restrictive institutions of the ceremonial law is neither a matter of course nor a matter of indifference, but a glorious promise, altogether worthy of the solemn oath by which it is attested here." H. C.

10. The meaning is not that God's promise is as stable as the mountains, but that it is more so; they shall be removed, but it shall stand forever. A.

God's favors to His people appear very constant, and His kindness everlasting; for it is formed into a covenant, here called a "cove-

nant of peace," because it is founded in reconciliation and is inclusive of all good. This is as firm as the covenant of providence; it is "as the waters of Noah," as that promise which was made concerning the deluge, that there should never be the like again to disturb the course of summer and winter, seedtime and harvest (verse 9). God then contended with the world in great wrath, and for a full year, and yet at length returned in mercy, everlasting mercy; for He gave His word, which was as inviolable as His oath, that Noah's flood should never return, that He would never drown the world again. And God has ever since kept His word, though the world has been very provoking; and He will keep it to the end. And thus inviolable is the covenant of grace, "I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee" as I have been, "and rebuke thee," as I have done. He will not be so angry with them as to cast them off and break His covenant with them. God's kindness shall never depart from His people, for whom He loves, He loves to the end; nor shall the covenant of His peace ever be removed, for He is the Lord that has mercy on His people. Therefore the covenant is immovable and inviolable, because it is built not on our merit, which is a mutable, uncertain thing, but on God's mercy, which is from everlasting to everlasting. H. —The covenant of peace is not to be overthrown by trials, temptations or sins. So far from it, that these prove its stability and certainty. Every believer is at this moment in the very state in which God intended he should be, and in which it is best for him to be; and this, though afflictions, trials, deep desertions, yea, though sin and corruptions assail, and even overcome him. The great proof that he is a believer in such circumstances is, that he prays for faith and patience under the rod of affliction, hates his sins when they prevail against him, and longs for the light of God's countenance while he walks in darkness. *Hill.*

The stately march of the grand English translation lends itself with wonderful beauty to the melody of Isaiah's words. But the thought that lies below them, sweeping as it does through the whole creation and parting all things into the *transient material* and the *immortal Divine*, is still greater than the music of the words. *These* are removed, *this* abides. And the thing in God which abides is that gentle tenderness, that strange love, mightier than all the powers of divinity besides, and permanent with the permanence of His changeless heart. There come out of these words thoughts

of that Divine relationship to us which are meant to strengthen us in the contemplation of that which is perishable and amid the changing of all that is material. "*My kindness*"—what a revelation of God! It tells me that the infinite, undying, imperishable love of God is mine; older than the mountains, deeper than their roots in the great abyss, wider than the heavens and stronger than all my sins, is the love that grasps and keeps me and will not let me go, that lavishes its tenderness upon me, beseeches me and pleads with me, woos me, rebukes and corrects me, and that sent His Son to die for me. And then there is the consequence and outcome of that imperishable and unremovable loving-kindness: "*My covenant of peace,*" or "*the covenant of My peace.*" We are to think of this great, tender, changeless love of God, which underlies and towers above all things, which overlaps beyond them all and fills eternity, as being placed under a guarantee and being under a solemn obligation. God comes into a covenant with you and me, and His covenant is this: "*I promise that My love shall never leave thee!*" A. M.

No, the covenant of God's peace with His people is an everlasting covenant. Neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant. His loving-kindness reaches into the future. The covenant is a covenant of promise. Beautifully the prophet in the next verses puts this promise under the figure of a lovely palace, which shall be the dwelling-place of God's own. *Vincent.*

11. The figure now changes, from a wife restored to favor and blessed with children, to a city after storms and ruin rebuilt in magnificence and beauty. The apostle clearly applies it to "the Jerusalem above," the mother city of all true believers. But it is here viewed at an earlier period than in the visions of Apocalypse, while its foundations are being laid. *Birks.*

12. It is here promised in the particular instances of those things that shall be the beauty and honor of the Church, which are knowledge, holiness and love, the very image of God in which man was created, renewed and restored. And these are the sapphires and carbuncles, the precious and pleasant stones, with which the Gospel Temple shall be enriched and beautified, and these wrought by the power and efficacy of those doctrines which the apos-

tle compares to gold, silver and precious stones, that are to be "built upon the foundation." H.

13. Dropping all figure and passing from poetic drapery to prosaic simplicity, the prophet gives here the very ideas; all Zion's children *disciples* of the Lord; the Divine Spirit teaching them of God, putting His laws unto their minds and writing them in their hearts, as said Jer. 31:34, and quoted by the writer to the Hebrews (8:11). The key to this passage is given by our Divine Lord Himself: It is written in the prophets, "and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto Me" (John 6:45). When God by His Spirit teaches the sinner, He leads him at once to Jesus. H. C.—The promise is not one of occasional instruction, but of permanent connection with Jehovah, as His followers and partakers of His constant teaching. That the words are applicable to the highest teaching of which any rational being is susceptible—to wit, that of the Holy Spirit making known the Father and the Son, we have our Saviour's own authority for stating. (See John 6:44, and cf. Matt. 23:8; Heb. 8:11; 1 John 2:27.) Paul too describes believers as taught of God in relation to the duties of their calling (1 Thess. 4:9). Similar promises under the Old Testament are given in Jer. 31:34 and elsewhere. A.

Notice the breadth of this prophetic declaration. It is not limited to her gifted prophets, nor to her ordained apostles, bishops, pastors and preachers, but is shared by *all*; "*all her children shall be taught of the Lord.*" H. C.—Then the Church is all glorious when it is full of the knowledge of God, and that is promised here, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." The Church's children, being born of God, shall be taught of God; being His children by adoption, He will take care of their education. It is a promise of the Spirit of illumination. Our Saviour quotes it with application to Gospel grace, and makes it to have its accomplishment in all those that were brought to believe in Him (John 6:45), "It is written in the prophets, They shall be all taught of God;" whence He infers, that those, and those only, come to Him by faith that have heard and learned of the Father, that are "taught by Him as the truth is in Jesus" (Eph. 4:21). There shall be a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace upon Christians, to "teach them all things" (John 14:26). H.

14. Since the verse preceding traces piety in

man to the teaching of God, so the idea here seems to be that God's righteous faithfulness secures and establishes man's righteous piety and life. The former includes the latter as the cause does its effect. H. C.

15. The promise of the preceding verse is here so modified as to provide for every possible contingency. If enemies should be assembled, it will not be by Divine command (cf. chaps. 10:5; 47:6), and they shall end by coming over to the side of those whom they assail.

16. The general meaning evidently is that God can certainly redeem His pledge, because all instruments and agents are alike at His disposal and under His control. He is not only the maker of the weapons of war, but the maker of their maker, as well as of the warrior who wields them. The pronoun in both clauses is emphatic. It is I (and not another) who created them. A.

The account given here of the smith's process is, "that bloweth into the coal-fire, or fire of coals, and bringeth out by this means his tools for his work"—referring to the manufacture of his own implements. As the smith makes his tools with the aid of fire and hammer, so God can make and use *His* instruments with perfect wisdom and power. As God creates the smith who with the aid of fire makes his hammer, and with the aid of hammer makes the sword and the spear of war, and as God alone sustains him through all these processes, surely this same God can cut short all efforts to harm His Zion at any one of ten thousand points as may be His pleasure.

17. Neither weapons for violence nor tongue for accusation shall prosper against thee. The former covers war; the latter, litigation. Such is the "inheritance of the *servants of the Lord*." The plural here looks beyond the one special "servant of the Lord" who appears (chaps. 52:13 and 53:11), to all His associated people who are identified with Himself in sympathy and labor for the common cause. The last clause seems to mean, "And this (or such) is their righteousness from Me," saith the Lord. Such is their piety and such its fruits of righteousness from My hand. H. C.

Every tongue against thee. The idea is, that truth and victory in every strife of words should be on the side of the Church. To those who have watched the progress of discussions thus far on the subject of the true religion, it is needless to say that this has been triumphantly fulfilled. Argument, sophism, ridicule, have all been tried to overthrow the truth of the Christian religion. Appeals have been made to astronomy, geology, antiquities, history, and indeed to almost every department of science, and with the same want of success. Poetry has lent the charm of its numbers; the grave historian has interwoven with the thread of his narrative covert attacks and insinuations against the Bible; the earth has been explored to prove that "He who made the world and revealed its age to Moses was mistaken in its age;" and the records of Oriental nations have been appealed to, but in all these contests ultimate victory has declared in favor of the Bible. And no matter from what quarter the attack has come, and no matter how much learning and talent have been evinced by the adversaries of the Bible, God has raised up defenders to meet these charges, and to turn the scales in favor of the cause of truth. *Barnes*.

Righteousness which is of Me. We have no righteousness of our own; yet, saith the Lord Jesus, the righteous one, "Their righteousness is of Me." We are made the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). When we are taught this by the Spirit of truth, instead of looking into ourselves for righteousness, we cry out in the joy of faith, I have found it: "In the Lord have I righteousness" (Isa. 45:24). Then we have a living union with *the Lord our righteousness*, by faith; being perfectly righteous in Him, we have righteous hopes, fears, desires, a righteous walk and righteous expectations; for we know our salvation is of the Lord. The Spirit of truth does not leave us to the unrighteous notions of salvation on account of our own works, duties and performances, either in whole or in part; but He shows us such matchless glory in our Lord's *one* everlasting righteousness, that we renounce all our own righteousness and all dependence on it for salvation. *W. Mason*.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LV.

THE GOSPEL INVITATION AND ENTREATY.

55 : 1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.
 2 Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul
 3 delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me ; hear, and your soul shall live : and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.
 4 Behold, I have given him for a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and a nation that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel ; for he hath glorified thee.
 6, 7 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near : let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.
 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my
 10 thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth
 11 seed to the sower and bread to the eater ; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth : it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it
 12 shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace : the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the
 13 trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree : and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

THE great central prophecy of the sufferings of Christ (chap. 53), and of the blessings to the Church through His death and resurrection (chap. 54), is here followed by an earnest call to receive the heavenly gift. *Birks.*

This chapter is closely connected in sense with the preceding chapters. It flows from the doctrines stated in chap. 53, and is designed to state what would follow from the coming of the Messiah. It would result from that work that the most free and full invitations would be extended to all men to return to God and to obtain His favor. There would be such a fullness and richness in His work ; there would be such ample provision made for the salvation of men, that the most liberal invitations could be extended to sinners. In common indeed with all the previous chapters (from chap. 40), we are to regard this as primarily addressed to the exiles in Babylon, and as designed to cheer them in their painful captivity by the prospect of what should yet occur under the Messiah who was to come. The main idea in the chap-

ter, I conceive to be, *that the effect of the work of the Redeemer would be to lay the foundation for a universal invitation to men to come and be saved.* An invitation of the most unlimited nature may be offered. It may be offered to all classes of men. So ample would be the merits of His death (chap. 53) ; so full and universal the design of the atonement ; so rich the provisions of mercy, that all might be invited to come, and all *might come* and partake of eternal life. To state this, I suppose to be the main design of this chapter. It may be regarded as comprising the following parts :

1. A universal invitation to come and embrace the provisions of mercy (verses 1-3).

All were invited to come ; even they who were the most poor and needy, who had no money, were invited to come as freely as to running waters and streams (verse 1). They were now regarded as spending their money and their labor for that which produced no permanent satisfaction—descriptive of the world in its vain efforts to find enjoyment (verse 2).

If they would come to God they should live—live forever. He would make with them an eternal covenant (verse 4).

2. To encourage them to this, the assurance is presented that God had given the Messiah to be a leader of the people, and that under Him distant nations should embrace the truth and be saved (verses 4, 5).

3. In view of the fulness of the provisions of mercy, and of the fact that a great leader had been provided, all are encouraged to come and seek God (verses 6-13). This invitation is pressed on their attention by several considerations.

Jehovah might now be found; His throne was accessible, and He was ready to pardon abundantly all sinners who were disposed to forsake the error of their way and to return to Him (verses 6, 7). God shows that His designs should not be prostrated. His plans were high above the plans of men, and His thoughts more elevated than theirs, and His counsels should stand. The rain descended on the earth and accomplished His great plans, and so it would be with His word. Nothing should fail. His promises would be fulfilled and His designs would take effect, and there was, therefore, every encouragement to come and partake of His favor and His grace (verses 8-11). There should be rich and abundant blessings attending their return to God, and universal rejoicing from their embracing the religion of the Redeemer, and becoming interested in His mercy and salvation (verses 12, 13).

There is not to be found in the Bible a chapter more replete with rich invitations than this; nor perhaps is there anywhere to be found one of more exquisite beauty. To the end of the world it will stand as the fullest conceivable demonstration that God *intended* that the offers of salvation should be made to all men; and that He designs that His Gospel shall be successful on the earth, and shall accomplish the great plans which He had in view when He devised the scheme of redemption. While this precious chapter remains in the Book of God no sinner need despair of salvation. *Barnes.*

This chapter, which breathes forth the very soul of Gospel invitation and entreaty, is logically connected with the two which precede it. The sufferings of Christ (chap. 53) making atonement for sin really provide this Gospel feast with its living waters—its wine, milk and bread of life—for the needy souls of men; while the joyful change that comes over Zion (chap. 54) breathes new life into her soul and rouses all her energies to enlarge her tent-room for

new converts. Now all this presupposes that she addresses herself to the work of inviting and beseeching ruined men to come to her own crucified Saviour for mercy. Hence this chapter is suggestive to the Saviour's people of the work they have to do in filling up their tents and homes with the hungry who need the bread of life, "Go ye out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that My house may be filled." We may suppose also that the prophet's own soul is penetrated, filled and fired, with the glorious truths which he has been recording (chaps. 52-54), and now, seeing such provisions made for the salvation of lost men (chap. 53), and such gracious purposes of God revealed in respect to the enlargement of Zion by the conversion of vast nations (chap. 54), he cannot do less or otherwise than to break forth in these overflows of entreaty and invitation. How the deep tides of his emotion surge and overflow under the power of this momentous and glorious truth—*salvation enough—free for all!* How he longs to see them come, in thronging hosts on hosts, to these abundant supplies of living bread and water! Hence he puts these words on record, both as the outgoings of his own heart and as suggestive to God's people of their mission to invite the perishing, and suggestive also to sinners themselves of the freeness and fulness of God's mercy and of His longing desire to see them returning, penitent, yet trustful, to His feet. H. C.

1. *Ho every thirsty one, come ye to the waters; and he to whom there is no money, come ye, buy (food) and eat; and come, buy, without money and without price, wine and milk.* The promises contained in the preceding chapters to the Church are now followed by a general invitation to partake of the blessings thus secured. Water, milk and wine are here combined to express the ideas of refreshment, nourishment and exhilaration. Under these figures are included, as Calvin well observes, all things essential to the spiritual life. A.

Waters, to represent spiritual blessings, forgiveness of sins, peace with God and moral cleansing, appear elsewhere in Isaiah—*e.g.*, chaps. 12:3; 44:3 and 55:6, 7. Feasting on food at once delicious and nourishing is only a slight modification of the same figure, as in chaps. 25:6; 62:8, 9 and 65:13. Our Lord resumes both these figures—that of water in John 4:14 and 7:37; that of feasting in various parables—*e.g.*, Matt. 22:1-10 and Luke 14:15-24, and also in His representation of His own flesh as the bread of life (John 6:32-58).

The central idea is, the best and most needful things for the body made the symbols of the best and most vital blessings for the soul. The abundance and freeness of the former represent the yet richer abundance and freeness of the latter. H. C.

Food and money are objects which all men desire; the first a necessity of life; the second a means of comfort and luxury, and also of distinction and power. Both here are symbols of good or happiness, which is that for which men are always longing and striving; but they often mistake for food that which is not wholesome nor nourishing. Christ comes to us as the embodiment of all good; He is the bread from heaven; He is the fountain of living waters; He is the incorruptible treasure; He is the life everlasting. And all that He is He offers to all freely, without price. "These gratuitous blessings are contrasted with the costly and unprofitable labors of mankind to gain the same end in another way." Only one condition is annexed, and this arising from the nature of the case—the sense of need, the desire to possess, the willingness to seek. J. P. T.

Where has there been a nobler flight of imagination than in the passage in which the prophet calls upon those who have no money to buy and eat, to buy wine and milk "without money and without price"? No other language could have made so startling the contrast between the poverty of the blessings which are bought with human wealth, and the riches of those which are bought without it, though not without lavishing freely the treasures of the heart and soul. *Lon. Spectator.*

To a soul that flames with the consciousness of God and yearns for rest and peace, to the sense of sin, to the sense of sorrow, to the conscience never wholly stifled, to the desires after good never utterly eradicated and never slaked by aught besides itself, does this mighty word come. Not to this or that sort of man does it address itself, but to the common humanity which belongs to all, to the wants and sorrows and inward consciousness which belong to man as man. A. M.

The freeness of the offered gift is implied by the strong terms of invitation, Ho, every one, come ye! Gratuitousness could not be more strongly expressed. It is here held forth and proclaimed with Divine earnestness, that he who comes to the salvation of the Gospel receives it without any offer of recompense or any worthiness on his own part. The fountain of life has indeed its price, a price which has been paid. It cost the agonies and death of

the Son of God. J. W. A.—The unspeakable gift was the result entirely of God's eternal, self-moving love. No mistake can be greater or more directly in the face of Scripture than that which fancies the love of God procured for sinners by the mediation of Christ. The very reverse was the truth. The atonement sprung from the love, not the love from the atonement. And as for the blessings of salvation, which are all conferred on the ground of the righteousness and atonement of Him who is Himself the great gift of Divine love, they are all freely offered and freely bestowed. The language of the entire Bible on this point is in harmony with that of Isaiah: "Ho, every one that thirsteth," etc. *Wardlaw.*

It is nowhere said in the Bible that Christ so died for me in particular, as that by His simple dying, the benefits of His atonement are mine in possession. But it is everywhere said in the Bible that the benefits of His atonement are mine in *offer*. They are mine, if I will. Such terms as *whosoever* and *all* and *any*, and *ho every one*, bring the Gospel redemption specifically to my door; and there it stands for acceptance as mine in offer, and ready to become mine in possession, on my giving credit to the word of the testimony. The terms of the Gospel message are so constructed, that I have just as good a warrant for reckoning myself dead unto sin, as if, instead of the announcement that God had set forth Christ to be a propitiation for the sins of the world through faith in His blood, I had been the only sinner in the world; or I had been singled out by surname, and it was stated that God had set forth Christ a propitiation for me individually, through faith in His blood. *Thomas Chalmers.*

God made us that He might love us. God has given us the capacity of loving Himself, and He has made it a law of our being that we must love Him if we are ever to be happy, that there is no happiness for us but in fulfilling that law of our being which requires us to love the living God. Yet how wonderfully little of this longing there is in our hearts, this thirst for God, the living God; and all the while God, looking down upon us in His infinite mercy, is longing for our hearts, the hearts of His children. We may say it with reverence that the heart of God is athirst for our love, and longs that our hearts should be athirst for Him. *Bp. Maclagan.*

The thirst of the human soul after God is a great argument that there is a God to be thirsted for. Men would not thirst for that for which they have no affinity. The human soul

longs for the sympathy of some being higher than, and yet like, itself. The presence of God can only be imagined as, in some sense, a human presence. The practical proof of the being of God—not of God as a mere power, but of God who has created man, and who loves him with the love of a Father, and desires a return of love for love—is to be found in the birth, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Bp. Goodwin.*

There is in every man an unconscious and unsatisfied longing after God. That is the state of nature. No man is made to be satisfied from himself. For the stilling of our hearts, the strengthening and joy of our being, we need to go beyond ourselves. No man is independent, or carries within him the fountain from which he can draw; and if a man's life is to be strong and happy, he must get the foundation of his strength somewhere else than in his own soul. We are made to need not things, but living beings. Hearts want hearts. We need one Being who shall be all sufficient. We want one Being in whom shall be sphered all perfection, in whom shall abide all power and blessedness, beyond whom thought cannot pass, out of whose infinite circumference love does not need to wander, besides whose boundless treasures no other riches can be required, who is light for the understanding, power for the will, authority for the practical life, purpose for the efforts, motive for the doings, end and object for the feelings, home of the affections, who is all in all, and without whom is misery and death. Christ, the manifested God, is such a Being, for Christ is everything that a man can want. We are made to be restless until we possess perfect truth—there it is! infinite, unchangeable love—there it is! rest, purity, gladness, light in our souls—there they all are! Whatever form of human nature and character may be yours, whatever exigencies of life you may be lying under the pressure of—man or woman, adult or child, father or son, man of business or man of thought, struggling with difficulties or bright with joy—"out of His fulness," and His only, all may "receive grace for grace." *A. M.*

True faith utterly forgets itself, and credits the assurance of God's free pardon. It looks away from its own worthiness and its own unworthiness, and hears God saying, "Ho!" "Come ye!" Come without money and without price! And it comes, without turning to the right hand or to the left. The question no longer is, What am I? but what is God? Is He true? Has He spoken? It sets to its seal,

that God is true. It acquiesces in a righteousness already finished. So it saves. The doctrinal truth which lies at the basis of all is, that the procuring cause of our acceptance with God is not anything done by us, or in us, not any work, preparation, frame or feeling, but only the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. The trumpet sounds thus, from over the fresh fountain, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life, freely." And the persuaded soul, now taught the great lesson of self-renunciation and self-forgetfulness, and swallowed up in admiration of the stupendous gift, falls into the open arms of dying Love. *J. W. A.*

The one essential truth to accept about the Gospel is, that no money can buy our salvation, no suffering merit it, no repentance procure it, no holiness produce it. The utmost that our own moral action can do for us, and this too is by the grace of God, is to create and enlarge the receptive faculty in us. If we will not take salvation as a gift, we cannot have it at all. *Bp. Thorold.*

2. The gratuitous blessings offered by Messiah are contrasted with the costly and unprofitable labors of mankind to gain the same end in another way. It was not that they refused food, nor even that they were unwilling to buy it; but they mistook for it that which was not nourishing. *A.*

All the pursuits of the world are "vanity and vexation of spirit." The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. Nothing less than God's love, revealed in the cross of Christ, can meet the deep craving of the immortal soul. "Hearken diligently"—literally, "hearken, yea, hearken." The word is repeated to express the urgency of the invitation and to enforce a double measure of attention. *Birks.*

No man who feeds his heart and mind on anything short of God is really at rest in anything that he does or possesses. Occasional twinges of conscience, dim perceptions that after all they are walking in a vain show, glimpses of nobler possibilities, a vague unrest, an unwillingness to reflect and look the facts of their condition in the face—these are the conditions that attach to all godless life; and so there is no real fruit for the man's thirsty lips to feed upon. The smallest man is too large to be satisfied with anything short of infinity. *A. M.*

If the question were put, Wherefore did God make man? who would not be ashamed to answer, He made him to eat and drink and take

his pleasure, to gather up wealth for he knows not who; to use his inventions, that each one may become a talk and wonder to the rest; and then when he hath fetched a few turns upon the theatre, and entertained the eyes of beholders with a short scene of impertinences, descend, and never be heard of more? What, that he should come into the world furnished with such powers and endowments, for this! It were a like case, as if one should be clad in scarlet to go to plough, or curiously instructed in arts and sciences to tend swine. *Howe.*

All the wealth and pleasure in the world will not make one meal's meat for a soul. Eternal truth and eternal good are the only food for a rational and immortal soul, the life of which consists in reconciliation and conformity to God, and in union and communion with Him, which the things of the world will not at all befriend. "They satisfy not," they yield not any solid comfort and content to the soul, nor enable it to say, "Now I have what I would have." Nay, they do not satisfy even the appetites of the body; the more men have, the more they would have. Rich people live by their money, poor people by their labor; but both mistake their truest interest while the one is trading, the other toiling for the world, both promising themselves satisfaction and happiness in it, but both miserably disappointed. God vouchsafes compassionately to reason with them: "Wherefore do you thus act against your own interest?" "Why do you suffer yourselves to be thus imposed upon?" Let us reason thus with ourselves, and let the result of these reasonings be, a holy resolution not to "labor for the meat that perishes, but for that which endures to everlasting life" (John 6: 27). Let all the disappointments we meet with in the world help to drive us to Christ, and to seek for satisfaction in Him only. This is the way to make that sure which will be made sure. *H.*

There is no congruity between any outward thing and man's soul of such a kind as that satisfaction can come from its possession. There is no need for exaggeration. Worldly possessions have a good in them, they contribute to ease and grace in life, they save from carking cares and mean anxieties, they add many a comfort and many a source of culture. But, after all, a true, lofty life may be lived with a very small modicum. There is no proportion between wealth and happiness, nor between wealth and nobleness. The fairest life ever lived on earth was that of a poor man, and with all its beauty it moved within the

limits of narrow resources. We need enough for the physical being to root itself in; we need no more. *A. M.*

In what are you more ennobled than in the fact that you are related inherently to God; having a nature so high, wants so deep, and vast, that only He can feed them, and not even He by any bestowment which does not include the bestowment of Himself. Would you willingly exterminate this want of your being, and so be rid eternally of this hunger? That would be to cease from being a man and to become a worm; and even that worm, remembering what it was, would be a worm gnawing itself with eternal regrets. No, this torment that you feel is the torment of your greatness. It compliments you more, even by its cravings and its shameful humiliations, than all most subtle flatteries and highest applauses. Nay, there is nothing in which God Himself exalts you more than by His own expostulation when He says—"wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not; hearken diligently unto Me and eat ye that which is good. Incline your ear and come unto Me, hear and your soul shall live." Why should we humble ourselves to so many things that are ashes and call them bread; doubling our bodily pleasures in vices that take hold on hell; chasing after gains with cancerous appetite; torturing our invention to find some opiate of society, applause or show, that will quiet and content our unrest. All in vain. Oh, ye starving minds, hearken, for one hour, to this, and turn yourselves to it as your misery points you—God, God, God alone, is the true food. Ask it thus of God to give you the food that is convenient for you, and He gives you Himself. And that is bread, bread of life, bread of eternity. Take it for your true supply, and you hunger no more. *H. Bushnell.*

If regard be had to the whole scope of our nature and necessities and to the true aim of life as deduced therefrom, nothing is more certain than that no man will get the satisfaction that his ruling passions promise him, by indulging them. It is very sure that the way never to get what you need and desire is always to do what you like. And that for very plain reasons. Because, for one thing, the object only satisfies for a time. Yesterday's food appeased our hunger for the day, but we wake hungry again. And the desires which are not so purely animal have the same characteristic of being stilled for the moment, and of waking more ravenous than ever. "He that drinketh

of this water shall thirst again." Because, further, the desire grows and the object of it does not. The fierce longing increases, and of course the power of the thing that we pursue to satisfy it decreases in the same proportion. It is a fixed quantity; the appetite is indefinitely expansible. And so, the longer I go on feeding my desire, the more I long for the food; and the more I long for it, the less taste it has when I get it. It must be more strongly spiced to titillate a jaded palate. And there soon comes to be an end of the possibilities in that direction. Because, for another thing, after all, these desires are each but a fragment of whole nature, and when one is satisfied another is baying to be fed. A. M.

Satan promises the best, but pays with the worst; he promises honor, and pays with disgrace; he promises pleasure, and pays with pain; he promises profit, and pays with loss; he promises life, and pays with death. But God pays as He promises; all His payments are made in pure gold. T. Brooks.

We must thirst for salvation before we get it. It is sincerely and gratuitously offered, but if we do not want it we shall not be forced to take it. Thirst and drink, hunger and food, human dependence and Divine leadership, penitence and salvation, are as complementary as the lock and the key. Need will develop thirst, if we let it do so. If we will be saved, we shall be saved; not otherwise. We must realize the inadequacy of our low substitutes for salvation. A man would starve at a dinner-table if he insisted upon eating the wood, the china, the silver or the gold rather than those viands which were both provided and suitable for him. What countless thousands there are who prefer to buy stones instead of bread or who toil for a little unsatisfying wealth, pleasure, fame or power, rather than for that salvation which has cost the life of the Son of God! McPherson.

3. *Incline your ear and come unto Me, hear and your soul shall live (or let it live), and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, the sure mercies of David.* This is obviously a repetition of the same offer in another form; which shows that the two preceding verses cannot have respect to literal food or bodily subsistence. Here again the use of the word *soul* necessarily suggests the thought of spiritual life. Neither of the animal life nor of the appetite could it be said that it should live. The text contains a solemn assurance that the promise made to David should be faithfully performed in its original import and intent. Hence the mercies of David are called *sure*—*i.e.*, sure to

be accomplished; or it might be rendered faithful, credible or trusted, without any material effect upon the meaning. A.

The account of this covenant may be seen in 2 Sam. 7: 12-29 and 1 Chron. 17: 7-27; restated substantially in Ps. 89: 1-4, 19-37, and referred to 2 Sam. 23: 1-5. These passages show that in this covenant with David the chief points were: A great king in his line to whom God would sustain very special relations and who can be no other than the Messiah; a covenant affirmed repeatedly to be "everlasting," and embracing mercies that were *sure* as the faithfulness of Jehovah. David's own "last words" include this emphatic allusion to it: "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and *sure*" (2 Sam. 23: 5). Hence the pertinence of these words of our prophet, "Even the sure mercies of David"—*i.e.*, promised to David. H. C.

4. *Lo, (as) a witness of nations I have given Him, a chief and commander of nations.* The emphasis appears to be on *nations*, which is therefore repeated without change of form. The essential meaning is the same as that of chap. 49: 6—*viz.*, that the Messiah was sent to be the Saviour not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. His relation to the latter is expressed by three terms. First He is a witness—*i.e.*, a witness to the truth (John 18: 37) and a witness against sinners (Mal. 3: 5). The same office is ascribed to Christ in Rev. 1: 5; 3: 14. (Cf. 1 Tim. 6: 13.) The application of this verse to the Messiah, therefore, is entirely natural if taken by itself.

6. By a sudden apostrophe he turns from the Messiah to those whom He had come to save, and exhorts them to embrace this great salvation, to be reconciled with God. A similar exhortation, implying, like the present, that the day of grace is limited, occurs in Zeph. 2: 2. A.

Seek ye the Lord. Seek to obtain the true knowledge of Him; seek reconciliation with Him; seek His pardoning mercy. This address is made to all in view of the coming and work of the Messiah. That work would be so full and ample that an invitation could be extended to all to seek after God and to return to Him. It is implied here: 1. That men are by nature ignorant of God, or unacquainted with Him—since they are directed to "seek" for Him. 2. That if men will obtain His favor it must be sought. No man becomes His friend without desiring it; no one who does not earnestly seek for it. 3. That the invitation to seek God should be made to all. In this passage it is unlimited (cf. verse 7). Where there

are sinners, there the invitation is to be offered. 4. That the knowledge of God is of inestimable value. God would not command men to seek that which was worthless; He would not urge it with so much earnestness as is here manifested if it were not of inexpressible value.

While He may be found. It is implied here that God may now be found. That the time will come when it will be impossible to obtain His favor. The leading thought is, that under the Messiah the offer of salvation will be made to men fully and freely. But the period will come when it will be withdrawn. If God forsakes men; if He wholly withdraws His Spirit; if they have committed the sin which hath never forgiveness, or if they neglect or despise the provisions of mercy and die in their sins, it will be too late, and mercy cannot be found. *Barnes.*

Seek God whilst thou canst not see Him; for when thou seest Him, thou canst not find Him. Seek Him by hope, and thou shalt find Him by faith. In the day of grace He is invisible, but near; in the Day of Judgment He is visible, but far off. *Gregory.*—If we would not seek God in vain, let us seek Him in truth, often and constantly; let us not seek another thing instead of Him, nor for any other thing leave Him. *Bernard.*—God, that hath promised pardon to the penitent, hath not promised the respite of to-morrow to the impenitent. *Gregory.*—To be always intending to live a new life, but never to find time to set about it, this is as if a man should put off eating and drinking and sleeping from one day and night to another till he is starved and destroyed. *Tillotson.*—There is, for men, a possible absence from God; not of God from men, but of men from God. So our speech feebly and falteringly shapes the truth. God may be near to us and we not near to Him. An unfelt presence is no life nor comfort. It is a silent form near us in the dark. To be indifferent, where trust and love should be, is absence; and that, remember, is no single deed—it is a state; God is not “found” in it, not “sought.” *F. D. H.*—Do the Lord’s work in the Lord’s time; pray while God hears; hear while God speaks; believe while God promises; obey while God commands. *J. Mason.*

Self impelling, self-renovating power we have none; but the helm power we have, and if we use it rightly, it will put us in the range of all power, even the mighty power of God. Hence the great call of the Scripture salvation is, “come unto Me,” “come unto God;” because the coming unto God is the coming unto God’s

operation, and the receiving of what His Divine power will work in the soul, when He is tempted in it. Hence also the call to renounce our own will, to renounce the world, to renounce eternally sin; because whoever lives in his own will—lives for the world as his end, lives apart from all homage to God—cannot be in God’s will, or come at all into God’s operation. In the same way there must be a clearing of a thousand particular and even smallest things that will steer off the soul from God. An old grudge adhered to steers it forever away from God. Any mode of profit, whose fairness or beneficence to men we distrust, but will not give up, will do the same. In the same way, the dread only of being singular, the going after popularity, the fear of men’s opinions, the cringing of the soul to men’s fashions—all these give over the helm of one’s life to others, that they may turn it where they will—always away, of course, and still away from God. Every such thing must of necessity be renounced or even denounced, as we hope to come into God’s operation or come unto God. When the helm is practically set, honestly gauged for God, God will be a perfectly open harbor to it, but how can it think of entering either this or any other harbor, when it is really steering itself away? *H. Bushnell.*

If you seek first the kingdom, you shall find it. If you seek it second to any other interest, you shall not find it. God’s kingdom will bow itself down to no other. It will be a stepping-stone to no other. It came to find a place in the heart; to renew it; to possess the whole soul; and if it fail, it will return back to God and leave you behind. If you embrace the kingdom heartily, it will embrace you. If you neglect it, complain of none but yourself that you lose it. And the loss shall not be made good to you; for what shall you give in exchange for the lost kingdom of God; what give in exchange for your lost soul? *R. T.*

7. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts, and let him return unto Jehovah, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon (literally, multiply to pardon).* This is a continuation of the foregoing call, and at the same time an explanation of the way in which it was to be obeyed. We are here taught that the seeking of Jehovah, and the calling upon Him just enjoined, involve an abandonment of sin and a return to righteousness of life. *A.*

“Let the wicked forsake his way,” his evil course of life, and “his thoughts,” his purposes, wrong objects of pursuit, his selfish

and sinful aims and plans of life; the two phrases being designed to include all that pertains both to the outer and the inner life of man. He must make his heart right and his outer life right also; not his heart only, but his life; not his life only, but his heart no less. The word rendered "thoughts" means not merely or primarily opinions, views of things; but the moral purposes, the chosen objects which one lives for; the preferences, determinations which control all his subordinate activities. The grand inducement named here to urge sinners to seek God thus is the assurance of God's mercy in His free and abundant pardon. H. C.

Let them consider that they have to do with One who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax; that the heart of God is with them; that the darkness and death of Christ, now changed to the strength of intercession, are on their side, and all those heavenly promises which are Yea and Amen in Him, and which, as bright and as many as the stars in their courses, all fight for them. Let them think of Jacob's wrestling, of David's tears, of Paul's threefold prayer, of the woman of Canaan, of Christ Himself, who was always heard, and yet had to cry in agony; and let them be sure that if they continue to look to God they shall be lightened, and find there were good reasons for the cloud and darkness, even very abundant dews of God in them, to prepare them for coming sunshine. And if all these considerations fail, let them still take up this language, "Nay; but we will serve the Lord," "We cannot force from Him a sense of His favor, but we can humbly and perseveringly offer Him our service—not as a price, but as a humble tribute to Him, whose we are and whom we ought to serve. On this we are resolved, whatever be the issue, for this is just and right, and all His own." *Ker.*

Observe, before pardon can be sealed, he must forsake not this sin, or that, but the whole law of sin. "*Let the wicked forsake his way.*" He forsakes the way of sin that turns out of the whole road; in a word, thou must forsake the blindest path of all in sin's way, that which lies behind the hedge, as I may so say, in the thoughts of the heart, "*and the unrighteous his thoughts;*" or else thou knockest in vain at God's door for pardoning mercy, and therefore forsake all or none. *Gurnall.*

Take away the Gospel, and where art thou? Were it possible for thee to repent and become a new man, what settles the connection between repentance and salvation but the Gospel

promise? Will the violated law of works accept thy repentance instead of obedience? Doth it not expressly preclude any such expectation? Doth it give any ground to look for anything but death after sin? Thou must therefore fly to the Gospel or yield thyself lost. And know, it contains none but faithful and true sayings, that have more stability in them than the foundations of heaven and earth. *Howe.*

Many sins do not prevent our pardon or conversion. God's free gift is "of many offences unto justification" (Rom. 5:16); and it is written in this verse 7, "He will multiply to pardon." For nearly these six thousand years God has been multiplying pardons, and yet free grace is not tired and grown weary. The creatures owe a great debt to justice, but we have an able surety. There is no want of mercy in the creditor, nor of sufficiency in the surety. Certainly, mercy is an ocean that is ever full and ever flowing. The saints carry loads of experiences with them to heaven. Free grace can show you large accounts, and a long bill cancelled by the blood of Christ! *Manton.*

Impossible it is that He should reject any penitent sinner merely for the greatness of the sins he hath committed. It is the exaltation of His mercy (saith faith) that God hath in His eye when He promiseth pardon to poor sinners. Now, which exalts this most, to pardon little or great sinners? whose voice will be highest in the song of praise, thinkest thou? surely his to whom most is forgiven; and therefore God cannot but be most ready to pardon the greatest sinners when truly penitent. *Gurnall.*—I am a great sinner, sayest thou. I will in nowise cast out, says Christ. But I am an old sinner, sayest thou. I will in nowise cast out, says Christ. But I am a hard-hearted sinner, sayest thou. I will in nowise cast out, says Christ. But I have served Satan all my days, sayest thou. I will in nowise cast out, says Christ. But I have sinned against light, sayest thou. I will in nowise cast out, says Christ. But I have sinned against mercy, sayest thou. I will in nowise cast out, says Christ. But I have no good thing to bring with me, sayest thou. I will in nowise cast out, says Christ. *Bunyan.*

If the soul is really in earnest in seeking God, there is a consciousness of two things in that soul. One is the consciousness of how far off that life is from God, and the other is the consciousness of how near it is. And the two

together make the soul's salvation. If it did not seem so far away, the soul would think it easy to do that which is a great and profound thing to do. On the other hand, without the second consciousness there would come despair. Know the difficulty of salvation. Know the easiness of salvation. Know how far from God you are. Know how near to God you are. Keep all the fear of the Christian life. Keep all the hope of the Christian life. Struggle as if God was so far off that you would need all your strength to come to Him. Leap as if one single bound could carry you out of your wickedness into His righteousness and love. *Phillips Brooks*.—Open your whole nature to God, offer yourselves in the spirit of contrition and of a real, unquestioning faith to the occupancy of God, and the light will not more certainly break into the sky and fill the horizon with day, when the morning sun is risen. Ask, in one word, and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find. This now is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is not some new idea of the Gospel. It is an advance of the Divine love to recover lost ground and bring back guilty souls among men, to that which is the original, everlasting bliss and beauty of all the created intelligences of God. *H. Bushnell*.

8, 9. The word "for" connects verse 8 with the latter part of verse 7, appending it to sustain the declaration, "*God will have mercy ;*" "*God will abundantly pardon.*" God's thoughts and ways are here put in contrast with man's in the special point of His rich mercy and readiness to forgive, with design to overcome the repellencies of unbelief and conscious guilt in the sinner's heart. *H. C.*—As if He had said, "You must forsake your evil ways and thoughts, and by so doing, you infallibly secure My favor ; for as high as the heavens are above the earth, so far am I superior to you in mercy, not only in the rigor and extent of My requirements, but also in compassion for the guilty, in benevolent consideration even for the Gentiles, and in the constancy and firmness of My purposes when formed." *A.*

8. The contrast here is not between the holiness of God's ways and the unholiness of the thoughts and ways of sinners, but between the largeness of His ways of grace, the vastness of His thoughts of mercy, and the selfishness of the sinner, or the low conceptions of the penitent, when first he turns to God. *Birks*.

As the heavens are high above the earth, so are the great thoughts of God in them above man's thoughts. The Son of God coming from

heaven to die for man, the Spirit of God coming from heaven to live in man, to change man, the enemy of God, into His friend, His heir, and to do this for all who are but willing to make God's Son and Spirit welcome, these are thoughts which have a majesty and range so great and godlike that they show their origin. *Ker*.

At the same time that this passage refers primarily to the subject of pardon, and should be interpreted as having a main reference to that, it is also true of the ways of God in general. His ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not ours in regard to His moral government ; to His actual administration ; to His plans in the creation and government of the world. He has plans of accomplishing His purposes which are different from ours, and He secures our own welfare by schemes that cross our own. He disappoints our hopes ; foils our expectations ; crosses our designs ; removes our property or our friends, and thwarts our purposes in life. He leads us in a path which we had not intended, and secures our ultimate happiness in modes which we should not have thought of, and which are contrary to all our designs and desires. It follows from this, that we should form our plans with submission to the higher purposes of God. *Barnes*.

10, 11. *For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and thither returneth not, but when it has watered the earth and made it bear and put forth and has given seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be, which goeth out of My mouth ; it shall not return unto Me void (or without effect), but when it has done that which I desired, and successfully done that for which I sent it.* This is a new comparison, suggested by the mention of the heavens and the earth in the preceding verse. The tenth and eleventh form a single sentence of unusual length in Hebrew composition. The one contains the comparison properly so called, the other makes the application. *A.*

In addition to the grandeur and exalted magnitude of God's wonderful scheme of salvation, the prophet here sets before us, by another impressive figure, the absolute certainty of its success. The figure is drawn from the fixedness and invariable character of the laws and operations of material nature. Snow and rain descend from heaven, and water the earth, and promote vegetation ; this is the uniform and inevitable result. Just so every declaration from the mouth of God must have complete accomplishment. He who maintained the order of material nature fulfils with like precision His

own glorious designs in His scheme of grace. His word of salvation can no more fail to achieve the results which He has appointed for it, than natural causes can fail to bring to pass their own proper sequences. W. H. G.

This assures us that the promises of God shall all have their full accomplishment in due time, and not one iota or tittle of them shall fail. These promises of mercy and grace shall have as real an effect upon the souls of believers, for their sanctification and comfort, as ever the rain had upon the earth, to make it fruitful. That according to the different errands on which the word is sent, it will have its different effects; if it be not a savor of life unto life, it will be a savor of death unto death; if it do not convince the conscience and soften the heart, it will sear the conscience and harden the heart; if it do not ripen for heaven, it will ripen for hell. (See chap. 6 : 9.) One way or other, it will take effect. H.

"*My Word that Goeth out of My Mouth.*" Diversified as are its several parts in topic and style—a diversity running through the whole scale of prose and poetry, argument and song, history and apocalypse, proverb and precept, dirge and carol—there is, nevertheless, such a unity in its contents, as itself to be an argument for its Divine origin, for collusion among writers living fifteen centuries apart is impossible. Proceeding from one mind, it relates to one theme: the redemption of the human race by the Incarnate Son of God. Assured that there is but one redemption, we are assured also that there is but one revelation. This is so rounded and completed and sufficient, that no other is necessary. It precludes, by its own claims, the expectation of any other disclosures, inasmuch as those already made are ample for our guidance in this life and our salvation in the life to come. The peculiarity of the volume is, that it is the *only* infallible rule of human faith and duty. W. Adams.

The Scriptures are not only a revelation, but also the history of a revelation. They are primarily the records of the development and unfolding of the plans of God for the redemption of fallen mankind. These plans involved two great processes—viz., the preparation of salvation for man, and the preparation of man for salvation. Essentially, then, the Scriptures are the records of an educational process, in the development of which the grand and fundamental truths of the biblical religion, in their whole length, breadth and depth, were gradually unfolded through God's providential guidance and instruction of His people. There

is a growth from small beginnings, an unfolding of germs, and a historical development. The biblical religion is not a "book religion" in this sense, that from the very outset the whole plan of God was set ideally before the people in the shape of abstract principles and propositions; but these principles and truths were developed and perfected in their fulness rather in connection with the historical growth of the kingdom of God on earth; not, indeed, in the naturalistic and naturalizing sense now current in some circles. In these we are told that the great principles of this religion are the spontaneous and native expression of the religious trend and tendency of the Semitic mind, which has by natural endowment the same pre-eminence in this sphere that the Greek mind had in philosophical and æsthetic thought, and the Roman in legal and administrative.

No legitimate interpretation of the Christian Scriptures has yet been able to eliminate from the history of which they are the official documents the Divine factor as the *sui generis* element. No reasonable hypothesis can satisfactorily explain the deep truths of biblical teachings—no matter whether these truths are brought forth through the facts of God's special dealings with His people in shaping their destinies and fate, or whether they, through prophetic or apostolic inspiration, are given didactically as formulated propositions—unless on the assumption that their source and fountain-head is Divine. Indeed, the very fact that the stage of development at which the religious teachings in Israel had arrived at any particular period in their history was far in advance of their religious status and capacity, is evidence sufficient that it was not Israel that developed the fundamental principles of the biblical religion, but it was the latter which guided and directed the historical growth of the nation. It is just here, in the inversion of these facts, that we find the cardinal error of much of the neological biblical criticism of the day. Schodde.

The book is given to us as a whole. It is declared emphatically that the holy men who wrote it were moved by the Holy Ghost. What right have we to modify this declaration, and say that the Holy Ghost moved some of them more than others, or more at one time than at another? The attempt to cut and carve the Bible according to our ideas of good, better and best seems to us very much like taking a living man and trying to show by dissection that some parts of his body are more important than others. Every part of the body is essen-

tial to its completeness and perfection. Every part of it was divinely planned. The whole is "fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth" (Eph. 4 : 16). *Interior.*

For Christians it will be enough to know that our Lord Jesus Christ has set the seal of His infallible sanction on the whole of the Old Testament. He found the Hebrew canon just as we have it in our hands to-day, and He treated it as an authority which was above discussion—nay, more, He went out of His way, if we may reverently speak thus, to sanction not a few portions of it which our modern scepticism too eagerly rejects. When He would warn His hearers against the danger of spiritual relapse, He bade them remember Lot's wife. When He would point out how worldly engagements may blind the soul to a coming judgment, He reminds them how men ate, and drank, and married, and were given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. When He would put His finger on a fact in past Jewish history, which, by its admitted reality, would warrant belief in His own resurrection, He points to Jonah, three days and three nights in the whale's belly. When, standing on the Mount of Olives, with the holy city at His feet, He would quote a prophecy, the fulfilment of which would mark for His followers that its impending doom had at last arrived. He desires them to flee to the mountains, where they "shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place." Are we to suppose that, in these and other references to the Old Testament, our Lord was only using what are called *ad hominem* arguments, or talking down to the level of popular ignorance which He did not Himself share? Not to point out the inconsistency of this supposition with His character as a perfectly sincere religious teacher, it may be observed that, in the Sermon on the Mount, He carefully marks off those features of the popular Jewish religion which He rejects in a manner which makes it certain that, had He not Himself believed in the historic truth of the events and the persons to which He thus refers, He must have said so. But did He then share a popular belief which our higher knowledge has shown to be popular ignorance? and was He mistaken as to the worth of those Scriptures to which He so often and so confidently appealed? There are those who profess to bear the Christian name, and who do not shrink from saying as much as this; but they will

find it difficult to persuade mankind that, if He could be mistaken on a matter of such strictly religious importance as this, He can be safely trusted about anything else. Yes, the trustworthiness of the Old Testament is, in fact, inseparable from the trustworthiness of the Lord Jesus Christ; and if we believe that He is the true Light of the world, we shall resolutely close our ears against any suggestions of the falsehood of those Hebrew Scriptures which have received the stamp of His Divine authority. *Liddon.*

The Bible as an inspired record is an infallible and it is the final authority for faith and life. Its inspiration involves its infallibility. Interpreted, as all words must be, by its real spirit, it gives us truth without error. Light and life come from the ministry of the Word. Its hallowed sayings are our stay, when all other support fails; our rock amid the billows; the songs of our pilgrimage; the pledge of our final rest. Such implicit faith may be stigmatized as bibliolatry; but where else can we go to find the words of eternal life? Bibliolatry clings to the letter; spirituality in the letter finds the Spirit, and dares not disown the letter which guided to the Spirit.

For the enduring wants of the soul, for the problems of sin, salvation and eternity, we find here an unwavering authority and rest in faith and joy upon the last assurance of the highest testimony, "Thus saith the Lord." And as it is an infallible, so is it a final authority. No man may add unto or take away from the words of this Book. "Here is the judge that ends the strife." Like its Divine Author, it has full oft been called before human tribunals, been reviled, spit upon, yea, buried, that it might rise again with new power, and bless even its persecutors. Of controversy, as history testifies, it has ever been the arbiter; of opposing systems, the invariable conqueror; every scheme of men has become wan and shrivelled at its touch. Beyond its revelations and its prophecies thought cannot reach; it contains the oldest of records as the most living of prophecies. New assailants, in the flush of self-consciousness, call it antiquated, and its antiquity is as that of God Himself. It is older than the stars and the earth, and awaits their dissolution, that all its revelations may be fulfilled. But it is also ever new, as well as ever old; the most progressive, as it is the most conservative of influences; the counterpart of the wisdom of God. All literature has drawn deep and precious draughts from its fountain; its Orient pearls are scattered through all lands; philosophy has there found the test of its errors

and the lordliest of its truths. For four thousand years its words have been inspiration and life, comforting the downcast and breaking the oppressor's rod; pledging peace to the penitent, and opening to all the very gates of endless life; subduing with imperial might all other words; speaking with such tones of authority as you read in no other books; and in the very name of the Lord proclaiming a kingdom which has been ever advancing, yet never subdued. And thus like a living power, it has been doing a living and abiding work among the children of men, in every clime, in every language, and now wider than ever before are its words rehearsed. "Its lines have gone out through all the earth, and its words to the end of the world."

H. B. Smith.

Its spiritual unity is the witness of its Divine origin. Consisting of books, some of them the most ancient in the world, the rest due to an authorship extending over fourteen centuries, and written in several languages—each book when first written, whether historical, devotional, prophetic or doctrinal, as distinct in date and execution, and as independent a work as the histories of Thucydides or the poems of Homer or Sophocles, and by no means composed as an assigned portion of a collection to be subsequently organized into a canon or printed in a single convenient volume for the modern world—these writings, originating thus in widely distant ages and in so many and different authorships, do, nevertheless, when brought together, reveal a spiritual unity; constitute a progressive, but organic whole; agree during all these ages in setting forth one living and holy God, who is the same almighty lover of mankind and lover of righteousness, the same inexorable foe of obstinate vice, crime and sin alike under every dispensation; and manifestly record the slow development of one far-reaching purpose for reconciling men to God—for setting forth, throughout, one way to everlasting life, in the Christ of prophecy, in the Christ of history and the immortal ascended Christ of the Epistles and the Apocalypse. This is a phenomenon unique in literature, and inexplicable except by the truth that the Scriptures record a revelation given by One who saw the end from the beginning; by One Spirit, who took the exclusive work of conveying that revelation out of the hands of any single generation; so precluding the possibility of imposture at first or of conspiracy afterward. For it was impossible that the forgers or false prophets of sixty generations could agree in producing at last the complicated organism

of the Old and New Testaments. *Edward White.*

The faith of the Bible is as rigid and experimental in its character as the strictest science of the schools. It makes no arbitrary assumptions, rests on no disputed axioms, but upon the foundation of facts of the most impressive and varied character, it builds up, patiently and surely, its doctrines and its precepts; invites the most searching scrutiny into the testimonials which it adduces; and having by them established its first principles, gives not only for its fundamental axioms, but for its every inference and for each subsequent deduction the word of a God. Do the self-satisfied philosophers of this world tell us of the necessity of facts? We answer, the incarnation, the personal character, the crucifixion and resurrection of the Saviour are facts most fully proved, and standing alone, would be in themselves sufficient to prove the divinity of the revelation that is entwined about them, and of which they constitute the central supports, the chief and favorite theme. And every convert, ransomed by the power of this faith from the tyranny of evil habits, affords in himself a new fact, augmenting the mass of her evidences, and swelling her far-spreading and splendid "cloud-of-witnesses." *W. R. Williams.*

Scripture does not accomplish its final, perfect end until it secures man's salvation. The essential, decisive test of its Divine efficiency is not its teaching function, but its saving function. It is a revelation of the supernatural, not the natural. Through its length and breadth and depth and height it is Christocentric, and the light which irradiates it from centre to circumference is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The history of Scripture in the experience of the world is in exact accordance with these claims, and fully sustains them. It *does* make wise to salvation. It *is* profitable for discipline in righteousness. In the spiritual life of humanity the words of Christ have proved themselves to be spirit and life. Christ as the Life is the Light of the world. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. The voice of the written word is the voice of the personal word, and is therefore mighty and living. It speaks with the authority of law, which as Logos is enthroned eternally in the bosom of God. It finds an echo in the conscience. No one who obeys it is led astray, or lost. The wayfaring man who walks its paths of life and peace, though a fool, will not err therein. All

who surrender their hearts and lives to its claims find life eternal, peace indestructible, a joy unspeakable and flooded with glory. *L. J. Evans.*

Shall not return unto Me void. It is strictly and unquestionably true that God's word never returns to Him void. In every case it answers the purpose for which it has been sent forth; and it is impossible for any moral or intelligent being to come into contact with it without receiving some impression which will make him either worse or better than he was before. All the truths of God's word are in themselves eternal. They cannot be annihilated—they cannot be destroyed. Like the light that emanates from the sun, they may sometimes be obscured, or modified, or counteracted by other causes, and that to such an extent that their benignant influences may not be sensibly felt; but not a single truth falls on the ear and enters the heart that does not contribute to the formation of personal character. *J. A. W.*

It is a great mistake to imagine the only advantage derived from hearing is the acquisition of new truths. There is a spiritual perception infinitely more important than the knowledge which is merely speculative. The latter is at most but a means to the former, and this perception is not confined to new propositions. It is frequently, nay more frequently, attached to truths already known; and when they are faithfully and affectionately exhibited, they are the principal means of calling into action and strengthening the habits of internal grace. Love, joy, humility, heavenly-mindedness, godly sorrow for sin and holy resolutions against it are not promoted so much by novel speculations as by placing in a just and affecting light the acknowledged truths of the Gospel, and thereby stirring up the mind by way of remembrance. *While I am in this tabernacle, said Peter, I will not be negligent to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the present truth.* We appeal to the experience of every real Christian, whether the sweetest and most profitable seasons he has enjoyed have not been those in which he is conscious of having learned no new truth, strictly speaking, but was indulged with spiritual and transforming views of the plain, unquestionable discoveries of the Gospel. As the Word of God is the food of souls, so it corresponds to that character in this respect among others—that the strength and refreshment it imparts depend not upon its novelty, but upon the nutritious properties it possesses. It is a

sickly appetite only which craves incessant variety. *R. Hall.*

Our faith in the Holy Scriptures and in what they contain rests upon secure foundations. There are three broad and deeply laid bastions of evidence—the internal evidences of their divineness, the testimony of the Holy Spirit in our experiences, and their transforming power as shown in the history of our race. This last by itself is overwhelming to all objections. The wise and beneficent laws of every civilized power, the organization of society, the benign institutions, all the pure maxims of morals and the comfort and joy and hope bestowed on millions in all the ages, all these are from the Scriptures, which were bestowed on mankind when as yet there was none of them. To say that this book, the source of such beneficent power, is not Divine, would show a forfeiture of our faculties of comprehension. *Interior.*

The Bible does not need defence so much as it needs proclamation. It defends itself wherever it is known. Deep in every soul there dwells forever a witness to the truth, whose clear eye and steady voice will see and respond to it wherever it is known. We do not need to implore men to believe the truth. We only need that they shall apprehend it, and then we may defy them to deny it. And thus the Bible of eternal truth needs no other argument for its support than itself clearly preached. *Seelye.*

Among all the remarkable things about the Book, nothing is more remarkable than that there it is, after all that has happened. When we think of the gaps and losses in ancient literature, and the long, stormy centuries that lie between us and its earlier pages, we can faintly estimate the chances against their preservation. It is strange that the Jewish race should have so jealously preserved books which certainly did not flatter national pride, which put a mortifying explanation on national disasters, which painted them and their fathers in dark colors, which proclaimed truths they never loved and breathed a spirit they never caught. It is stranger still that in the long years of dispersion the very vices and limitations of the people subserved the same end, and that stiff pedantry and laborious trifling—the poorest form of intellectual activity—should have guarded the letter of the word, as the coral insects painfully build up their walls round some fair island of the Southern Sea. When one thinks of the great gulf of language between the Old and New Testaments, of the variety of authors, periods, subjects, literary form, the animosities of Christian and Jew, it is strange that we have

the Book here *one*, and that all these parts should blend into unity, unless the source and theme were one, and one hand had shaped each and cared for the gathering together of all. A. M.

In the *written* form which God has given to His word; and in the wondrous providence with which He has watched over its *integrity*, He has given perpetual security to this instrument of a final triumph in favor of Himself and His cause. What has appeared so often worsted in the conflict has not been, in reality, the Word of Truth itself, but only those emanations from itself which, by the power of the Spirit, have gone out for leaven, for mixture, for operation, through the great mass of surrounding evil. In itself it has ever remained incorrupt; giving forth its power; maintaining the ferment of good in the midst of evil; and preparing the way for the time when, the whole lump being leavened, truth shall everywhere prevail, the world yield to its sway, and all human things settle down into the unfermenting calm of light, and peace, and love, under Jesus, the spiritual king of all the earth. J. S. Stone.

The Bible is not, *as a Book*, the book we should have made it. But it *is* the Book of Him who here commends it to our acceptance. And it *has* prospered in every age since its first promulgation, and in every land to which according to the Divine purpose it has been sent. It takes effect upon men, singly and in communities. It comes as the dew or rain from heaven, or as the tempest; it is gentle and germinating, or it is a force irresistible. It does its office, here or there as the need may be, where human nature, as to its moral elements, is still in a cultivable state and is still reclaimable. Thus has it prospered in quickening to life millions of souls, and in nourishing the Divine life within these souls. So has it prospered in ruling the life, in strengthening the purpose, in giving heart to the courage of martyrs, and in imparting patience and contentment and a bright hope to the individual spirits of that great multitude which is gathering into the kingdom of heaven. These purposes the Scriptures of God have subserved, are now subserving, and shall continue to subserve to the end of time; and in a period not remote shall they carry light and life to every land which hitherto they have not visited. I. Taylor.

Our confidence in missions is—because God has sent His Gospel on purpose to convert the world; declared His word shall not return to Him void; promised to be always with its

faithful proclaimers, and predicted that all the world shall at length feel its transforming power. Faith in this is our only assurance and strength in any such undertaking. Now the special demand for this faith and its strongest trial are in “the day of small things.” *Then* is the proof whether we really believe and trust in the Almighty, and can act on an assurance that though “the beginning be small, the latter end shall greatly increase.” It is *no* faith that cannot be assured of the accomplishment of great things and great promises, till they seem to be accomplished, or till there be a rapid and magnificent progress toward that accomplishment; and that because mighty results are not obtained in the earlier course of operations, therefore feel as if the labor and expenditure were but thrown away. Foster.

Analogies between a Seed and the Word.

A seed is the most wonderful thing in the word. There is nothing else that contains so much in so little bulk. There is nothing else that concentrates within it such capacities and possibilities. It is the origin and end of organic life. It forms the bridge of transition from the grain of sand to the living cell. By means of it the naked rock is covered with verdure, and the desolate wilderness transformed into a garden. The analogy between the word of God and a seed is remarkably close and striking.

A first point of comparison is found in the life which they both possess. A seed is a living thing. Kept by itself, it lies passive, giving no sign of life or growth, and incapable of doing so. And yet it retains unimpaired the vitality and life-history of the whole organism from which it has sprung, and can reproduce these when it germinates and develops its hidden powers. It is by the seed that the continuity of vegetable life is preserved from generation to generation; so that in reality the long history of any species of plant from the creation of the world is simply the continuous unfolding from the seed of stem and leaf and flower and fruit, and the continuous retreat into the seed of fruit and flower and leaf and stem throughout the successive seasons that have existed upon the earth. And, thus possessed of latent potential life, a seed is a profound mystery, which, the more we think of it, the more inscrutable it becomes. There can be no life without it. If anything has been clearly and satisfactorily proved by recent experiments and discussions, it is that there is no such thing in nature as spontaneous genera-

tion. All life springs from previous life by means of the seed.

And in this respect is it not a striking emblem of the word of God? That word is a living word. "The words that I speak unto you," says Jesus, "they are spirit and they are life." It is not truth merely in a spoken or written form. It is more than knowledge. It is a living power; it does not work mechanically, but vitally. The words of Christ were the concentration and embodiment of His own life, just as truly as the seed is the concentration and embodiment of the life of the plant. The spoken word of Christ, heard by His contemporaries, contained all that was essential in His living among men; and the written word of the Gospel which we can hear and read contains for us all that the incarnation of Christ implies. The written word and the living word reveal the closest relationship between them. They both are God's manifestation of Himself to us. And not only in the doctrinal or specially saving truths of Scripture is this living power felt; even in its historical and common incidents we feel that there is a peculiar vital vividness transporting us into the old life of the past in a way that no other records of antiquity can do. The word of God is the highest of all life. And just as in nature it has been proved that dead matter cannot originate life under any circumstances whatever, except by the introduction into it of a living seed, so without the instrumentality of the word of God there can be no spiritual life. The Spirit takes of the recorded things of Christ, and shows them to us. Without the word there would be nothing to know, or obey, or love; without the Spirit there would be no saving knowledge, no obedience, no love. The Spirit operating upon the heart apart from the word would be only to give a vague inclination without an object as its end and purpose. And therefore all religion that does not spring from the seed of God's word is a dim abstraction or an unreal sentimentality. It is aimless and powerless, the continual ploughing and harrowing of a field without putting any seed into it. And just as the seed is not only living in itself, but the design and end of it is to produce life, to give rise to more abundant life, so the evangelist John is careful to close his Gospel—to be henceforth the seed of the Church—with a solemn admonition of the purpose for which it has been placed in our hands. "These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name."

Another point of resemblance between the seed and the word may be found in the small compass within which the living principle is enshrined in both. Nothing, as I have said, holds so much in so little bulk as a seed. It is a miniature orb, embracing the whole mystery of animated nature. An atom, often not so large as a grain of sand, contains within it all the concentrated vitality of the largest forest trees. It is a most remarkable example of nature's packing; for a seed consists of a single or a double leaf, folded in such a way as to take up the smallest possible room. And were it not that the miracle is repeated so incessantly before our eyes, we should find it difficult to believe that life could be so compacted; we should be filled with wonder at the sight of complicated structures—charming flower or noble tree—unfolding themselves from such minute storehouses of sleeping life. And in this respect the word of God may be compared to a seed. It is truth in its seed-form. We have in the Scriptures the most concentrated form of heavenly teaching. Nothing is omitted; nothing is superfluous. It contains all that is necessary for the salvation of man. Nothing can be added to it or taken away from it. It is rounded and finished off—full-orbed and complete, as every seed must be. All is contained within the smallest compass, so as to be easiest of comprehension, easiest of being carried in the memory and easiest of being reduced to practice. Every careful reader of Scripture must be greatly struck with the Divine economy with which its materials are arranged. There is nothing added for the mere sake of poetic embellishment or rhetorical effect. It is all full of meaning, and has a Divine purpose to serve. The seemingly dry details of history, the apparently uninteresting chapters of proper names, are like the nourishing material that is wrapped around the embryo in the natural seed, necessary for the proper understanding of the more vital and saving truth with which they are connected. All the wisdom of the scientific world, with its marvellous disclosures of the secrets of mountain and sea, star and rock and plant, do not bring us so near the great central truth in the natural as well as in the religious sphere, the very mind and heart of God, as one parable of Christ, or one of those grand prophetic figures in which all the glory of futurity is focussed. And the word of God is so compacted in the seed form, because it needs to be unfolded in the teaching and life of man. The soil was made for the revelation of the seed; and the seed was made to be re-

vealed by the soil. As the seed cannot disclose what is in it unless it fall into appropriate soil and be stimulated to growth by suitable conditions, so the word of God cannot disclose all that it contains unless it grow in an understanding mind and in a loving heart; unless by meditation and prayer it can expand from the seed-form to the blade, and the ear, and the full corn in the ear. And hence the word of God depends, for the richness of its disclosures, upon the nature of the soil into which it falls. It comes to all alike as a seed; and the varied comprehension of its meaning and the varied results which it produces are determined by the varied natures that make it their own. Wonderful things are seen out of God's law by those whose eyes God's Spirit has opened; rich meanings and applications are found by them lying under words and forms of speech in which others of more prosaic minds and carnal understandings see nothing. Their interpretation of Scripture is the vivid outgrowth of their own spiritual life. Another resemblance between the word of God and a seed may be seen in the wonderful effects which they both produce. By its germinating and expanding vitality, the seed quickens the dormant fertility of the soil and the passive powers of the atmosphere. It is a living vortex, drawing to itself all the blessings of heaven and earth, making the isolated portion of soil in which it is growing a part of the wide universe, and participating in all its beneficent influences. It finds dull, dead mould, and it takes it up into its own composition, impresses it with its own character, endows it with its own qualities, lays all nature under tribute for its sustenance and well-being, raises it thus from the inert mineral kingdom into the kingdom of life, and converts grains of sand and particles of air into a vigorous organism full of life and beauty. So the word of God is quick and powerful. When it enters the soul, it does not lie dormant in the intellect, but quickens the conscience. It does not affect our opinions or speculations merely, it affects our heart and life, it dominates our whole spiritual nature. It has the power of transmutation in it. It has a spiritual quickening energy. It is the source of saving life to souls dead in trespasses and sins. It has taken its place in the heart of human culture. Nothing else has wrought such a mighty revolution in human ideas. It makes disciples of every race. The most learned and the most ignorant are witnesses to its transforming power, making the simple wise, and giving to men of highest culture soul-sav-

ing, sanctifying knowledge. It is a Divine seed which came from heaven, and has brought the kingdom of heaven down to men—made the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. The harvest which has sprung from it is everywhere visible in the Church and the world. It is increasing in beauty and fruitfulness every day. It is covering larger and larger spaces of the earth's surface. It is reaching to the most savage and unreclaimed wastes of heathendom. And soon will it cover the whole earth with its glory and its abundance; and all people shall eat of its fruit, and know its saving health, and rejoice with the joy of harvest.

Such are some of the resemblances between the word of God and a natural seed. I might speak further at length of the wonderful vitality of a seed, its power not only of retaining life under the ordinary circumstances of nature for an indefinite period, but also of resisting the most destructive forces—an emblem, surely, of the indestructible vitality of the Bible, overcoming all the attacks of its enemies in every age and promising to remain to “the last syllable of recorded time” the great spiritual power of the world. But I must leave this tempting theme, and conclude with one or two personal suggestions. As the seed is made for soil, and soil for seed, so the heart of man is made for God's word, and God's word for the heart of man. They are mutually adapted. Without the seed of the word, the heart of man remains barren of all spiritual goodness; without the heart of man to grow in and develop its fulness, the word abideth alone, unrevealed. Let us use it, then, as seed sown in our heart, in our life, in our work, with prayers and tears, that under the increase of the Spirit it may grow and expand and fill wide neighborhoods with fruitfulness and beauty. We are sent into the world to sow, and not to destroy—to sow the seed of heaven, and thus raise in it a heavenly produce foreign to it, impart to it a principle of spiritual life which by its growth will choke out old evils and make all things new. And let us remember that we must give our own life in the sowing, as the plant gives its life in the seed. The word of truth must have our own life shrouded in it, expressed by it, if it is to become the means of life to others. The seed of God's word must have been sown in our own heart, grown up there, gathered round it and drawn up into its fair expanding growth from the soil and atmosphere of our own being, our own peculiarities of spiritual experience; and from this fair plant of grace that has grown with our growth and ripened with our ripe-

ness, we take the seed that is to reproduce a similar growth of blessedness in other hearts and lives. *Macmillan.*

12, 13. The people of God pass out from under the restrictions and limitations of the Mosaic age, emerging from its comparative darkness and imbecility ; and move upon the nations, open now to their Gospel mission. It is a joyful work ; the mountains and the hills break forth before them into singing ; the forest trees clap their hands in glad applause and exultant praise to their Creator. All nature seems conscious of the blessedness of this moral transformation, the glory of which is that men shall know the Lord and turn from their sinning to a holy life. Another figure conceives of the thorns and briars that came upon the earth, the curse for man's fall (Gen. 3 : 17-19), as now giving way to growths alike beautiful and useful. H. C.

13. Dropping the metaphor, the prophet then says in direct terms, that the glorious change predicted shall redound to the glory of its author. *It shall be for a name—i.e.,* it shall serve as a memorial, which is then described in other

words as a *sign of perpetuity* or everlasting token, with allusion, as Vitringa thinks, to those commemorative obelisks or pillars mentioned elsewhere (*e.g.*, chap. 19 : 19). This memorial is called perpetual because it *shall not be cut off*, pass away, or be abolished. A.—“ And this shall be to the Lord for a name ”—*i.e.*, for renown and for glory, a sign and proof of His enduring and surpassing love. This stupendous change will be the memorial of His loving-kindness to our lost race, to stand forever before the hierarchies of heaven as the measure and monument of Divine compassion and unutterable love.

Thus closes one of the most grand and sublime strains of prophecy (chaps. 52-55) that ever passed through human lips. It is the Gospel age seen with its final issues on earth outspread in prophetic vision, its suffering yet glorified Redeemer ; God's love to Zion and His assurances of restoring mercy ; the Gospel call, coupled with God's gracious purpose and pledge of its efficiency in making this sin-cursed earth again a paradise of moral purity and beauty. H. C.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LVI.

56 : 1 THUS saith the LORD, Keep ye judgement, and do righteousness : for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that holdeth fast by it ; that keepeth the sabbath from profaning it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. Neither let the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD will surely separate me from his people : neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD of the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and hold fast by my covenant : Unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a memorial and a name better than of sons and of daughters ; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the strangers, that join themselves to the LORD, to minister unto him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from profaning it, and holdeth fast by my covenant ; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer ; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar : for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all peoples. The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather *others* to him, beside his own that are gathered.

9, 10 All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, *yea*, all ye beasts in the forest. His watchmen are blind, they are all without knowledge ; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark ; dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber. *Yea*, the dogs are greedy, they can never have enough ; and these are shepherds that cannot understand : they have all turned to their own way, each one to his gain, from every quarter. Come ye, *say they*, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink ; and to-morrow shall be as this day, *a day* great beyond measure.

Chap. 56. While the Church, with its essential institutions, is to continue unimpaired, the old distinctions, national and personal, are to be done away and the Jewish people robbed of that pre-eminence of which its rulers proved themselves unworthy. The day is coming when the righteousness of God is to be fully revealed, without the veils and shackles which had hitherto confined it (verse 1). For this great change the best preparation is fidelity to the spirit of the old economy (verse 2). No personal or national distinctions will be any longer recognized (verse 3). Connection with the Church will no longer be a matter of hereditary right (verses 4, 5). The Church shall be henceforth coextensive with the world (verses 6-8). But first, the carnal Israel must be abandoned to its enemies (verse 9). Its rulers are neither able nor worthy to deliver the people or themselves (verses 10-12). A.

This chapter to verse 9 is evidently a continuation of the same general subject which is discussed in the previous chapters, and is closely connected with the great truths communicated in chap. 52 : 13-15 and chap. 53, respecting the coming and work of the Messiah. The general design of the prophet seems to be to state the happy results which would follow His coming and His work. In chap. 54 he states that that work would render the establishment and perpetuity of the Church certain. In chap. 55 he states that the work of the Messiah would lay the foundation for the offer of the Gospel to all men, and that it should certainly be successful on the earth and finally triumph, and produce great and important changes. In this chapter (verses 1-9) the same idea is presented in another form, that no one would be excluded from the offer of salvation, and that strangers and foreigners should become connected, with equal privileges, with the people of God. At verse 9 a new subject is introduced—the invasion of the land of Judea by foreign armies and the consequent punishment of the wicked and idolatrous part of the nation. This subject is continued in the following chapter. The following analysis will present a view of the design and scope of this.

1. The kingdom of God was near. The great work of man's redemption to which the prophet referred would not be long delayed, and those who were expecting the coming of the Messiah should be holy (verse 1).

2. The blessedness of those who should be admitted to the privileges connected with the kingdom of God and the coming of the Messiah (verses 2-8).

Who they would be : The man who kept the Sabbath (verses 2-4). The stranger and foreigner (verses 3-6). The eunuch (verses 3, 4). None should be excluded, whatever might be their rank in life or the estimation in which they were held among men.

The blessedness of that state ; the privileges of thus being admitted to the favor and friendship of God (verses 7, 8). They should be brought to His holy mountain ; they should be made joyful in the house of prayer ; their offerings should be accepted ; these favors should be extended to all people (verses 7, 8).

3. A prophecy respecting the invasion of the land on account of the crimes of the nation. The invasion is represented under the image of wild beasts coming to devour (verse 9). The cause of this : The indolence and unfaithfulness of the watchmen (verse 10). Their selfishness, avarice and covetousness (verse 11). Their revelry and intemperance (verse 12). *Barnes.*

1. The doctrine of the passage is simply this, that they who enjoy extraordinary privileges or expect extraordinary favors are under corresponding obligations to do the will of God ; and moreover that the nearer the manifestation of God's mercy, whether in time or in eternity, the louder the call to righteousness of life. These truths are of no restricted application, but may be applied wherever the relation of a church or chosen people can be recognized. A.

1, 2. What is here required is : 1. That we be honest and just in all our dealings, "Keep ye judgment and do justice." Walk by rule and make conscience of what you say and do, that you do no wrong to any ; render to all their dues exactly, and in exacting what is due to you keep up a court of equity in your own bosom, to moderate the rigors of the law. Be ruled by that golden rule, "Do as you would be done by." Magistrates must administer justice wisely and faithfully. This is required to evidence the sincerity of our faith and repentance and to open the way of mercy, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." God is true to us, let us be so to one another.

2. That we religiously observe the Sabbath day. We are not just if we rob God of His time. Sabbath sanctification is here put for all the duties of the first table, the fruits of our love to God ; as justice and judgment for all those of the second table, the fruits of our love to our neighbor. The duty required is to keep the Sabbath ; to keep it as a talent we are to trade with, as a treasure we are intrusted with,

"Keep it holy, keep it safe, keep it with care and caution, keep it from polluting it; allow neither yourselves nor others either to violate the holy rest or omit the holy work of that day." The encouragement we have to do this duty, "Blessed is he that doeth it." The way to have the blessing of God upon our employments all the week is to make conscience and make a business of Sabbath sanctifications; in doing so we shall be the better qualified to do judgment and justice. The more godliness, the more honesty (1 Tim. 2 : 2).

3. That we have nothing to do with sin, "Blessed is the man that keeps his hand from doing evil," any wrong to his neighbor, in body, goods or good name; or, more generally, anything that is displeasing to God and hurtful to his own soul. The best evidence of our having kept the Sabbath well will be a care to keep a good conscience all the week. H.

An upright, holy, honest man not only worships God and keeps the Sabbath, but he is upright in the discharge of all the duties which he owes to his fellow-men. These two specifications are evidently designed to include all the influences of religion—the proper service and worship of God and an upright and holy life. Never, in fact, are they separated. *Barnes.*

The Son of God and Son of Man is still widening out and building up for us His new kingdom on the earth—which wherever it really comes regenerates society and makes human life a new thing. Into that kingdom He sets the gate open. But though we may be in it there is this stern and solemn fact revealed there, that we are not of it and it is not in us unless we are growing every day into its inmost principle and law; unless we are getting liberated and purified by its charity from the selfishness and pride of that other kingdom which is closer to our senses, has a louder voice, and wears a handsomer outside; unless we are continually looking about us to see how we can be more just to those at our side, more helpful to those that *seem* to stand below us, reverencing more and more both God and man because we see both to be one in the glorified humanity of our Lord. F. D. H.

2. A reference to the primary and secondary ends of the Sabbatical institution and the belief involved in its observance. In the first place, it implied a recognition of Jehovah as the omnipotent creator of the universe (Ex. 20 : 11; 31 : 17); in the next place, as the sanctifier of His people, not in the technical or theological sense, but as denoting Him by whom they had been set apart as a peculiar people

(Ex. 31 : 13; Ezek. 20 : 12); in the next place, as the Saviour of this chosen people from the bondage of Egypt (De. 5 : 15). Of these great truths the Sabbath was a weekly remembrancer, and its observance by the people a perpetual recognition and profession, besides the practical advantages accruing to the maintenance of a religious spirit by the weekly recurrence of a day of rest. A.

Keeping the Sabbath sacred is put here in one clause, and in its parallel clause withholding the hand from every moral evil, as if the observance of the Sabbath were designed to comprehend or represent all religious observances, the entire external worship of God. This prominence given to the Sabbath must certainly imply that God holds its observance in specially high esteem, and that He intends it shall be a perpetual, and not a merely Jewish and transient institution. This high appreciation of the Sabbath and solemn purpose to make it perpetual rested on substantial grounds, the Sabbath being the grand public recognition of His creatorship; a sign and seal also of special covenant relation with Jehovah as the God of His people—"that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you" (Ex. 31 : 13). Moreover it had a vital utility as a reservation of time from other intruding and preventing avocations, for the unbroken study of God in His word and ordinances, and for His worship, both public and private. The Sabbath considered as "made for man" was the fruit of consummate wisdom and of true love to man's best interests. H. C.

3. The essential meaning of this verse is, that all external disabilities shall be abolished, whether personal or national. A.—The son of the stranger is any foreigner not of Jewish birth. If he is willing to join himself as a proselyte to God's people, let him not say or think that he and his class are walled out from communion and fellowship in the Church. The door of admission is to be set fully open and every middle wall of partition is to come down. H. C.

Two descriptions of persons are mentioned in this verse, strangers and eunuchs, who, looking to the economy of the Old Testament, might expect they should have an inferior share in the kingdom of Christ. *Vitringa.*—God declares here, that the Gentile should be accepted, under the Gospel dispensation (the partition wall being broken down), equally with the Jew; and that the times were now coming when the inward endowments of the soul be sufficient to give persons a title to the commun-

ion of saints, and their names be written in the book of life, a more lasting remembrance than posterity could entitle them to. *W. Lowth.*

4, 5. What it is that God delights in may be learned from chaps. 66 : 4 ; Jer. 9 : 24 ; Hos. 6 : 6. By holding fast my covenant is meant adhering to His compact with me, which includes obedience to the precepts and faith in the promises. The promise is not merely one of free access to the material sanctuary, but of a home in the household or family of God, an image of perpetual occurrence in the Psalms of David. A beautiful coincidence and partial fulfilment of the promise is pointed out by J. D. Michaelis, in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch whose conversion is recorded in the eighth of Acts, and whose memory is far more honored in the Church than it could have been by a long line of illustrious descendants. *A.*

7. Our Saviour quotes a part of the last clause, not in reference to its main sense, but to what is incidentally mentioned—viz., its being called a house of prayer. This part of the sentence was applicable to the material temple while it lasted ; but the whole prediction could be verified only after its destruction, when the house of God even upon earth ceased to be a limited locality, and became coextensive with the Church in its enlargement and diffusion. The form of expression is derived, however, from the ceremonies of the old economy, and worship is described by names familiar to the writer and his original readers. (Cf. Hos. 14 : 3 ; Heb. 13 : 13 ; John 4 : 21–23.) *A.*—"My holy mountain," "My house of prayer," "burnt offerings and sacrifices upon mine altar;" all come from the Jewish age. Yet their real significance belongs to the Gospel age and pledges to Gentiles as to Jews equal privileges of acceptable worship and of filial relationship to God. The prophecy anticipates that great truth which broke in slowly upon the dark minds of the Christian brotherhood soon after the day of the great Pentecost, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him" (Acts 10 : 34, 35). *H. C.*

It is not an enlargement, but a transformation of the Jewish dispensation which is here anticipated ; not a conversion to Israel, but to Israel's God ; not a merging of all nations into Israel, but a breaking down of separating walls ; not a universal synagogue, but a universal Church, in which all that had been national, preparatory, symbolic, typical, would merge into the spiritual reality of fulfilment.

But what is this prophecy from the Book of Isaiah other than a prediction of the words of Christ concerning those other sheep of His, not of the Jewish fold, whom He must bring, and who should hear His voice, that so there might be one flock and one Shepherd—words which He consecrated by His latest prayer. *A. E.*

Make them joyful in My house of prayer. They who truly love and fear God above all things find more joy and comfort in His house than anywhere else ; the whole work of the place is delightful to them, the Spirit of God co-operating with them in it, and God never failing to perform His promise here made to those who come to His house duly prepared, and keep their minds intent upon Him and the duties there performed. *Bp. Beveridge.*

God has ever ordained to man a set place for his regular, stated periods of worship. Neither groves nor hill-tops were God's first temples. Even in the patriarchal ages, among the nomadic generations, the few true worshippers of Jehovah performed their worship before the narrow altar of stones, the erection of their own hands, *builded* unto the Lord in some selected spot, which altar was set up once only in each place where they sojourned. One of the first commands of God to Israel, after their separation as His people, was, "Let them make Me a sanctuary," a place where I may *dwell* ! First the tabernacle, and afterward the Temple in Jerusalem. This was called God's holy dwelling—His house. For centuries and generations this *was* His holy dwelling-place. Under the better spiritual dispensation the single place hallowed by God's special presence became many. His dwelling-place God ever since has made, wherever, in lowly or costly structure, devout hearts congregate to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Every such house solemnly set apart to His worship, every such house where God Himself is present—and only so long as He is present—is God's house. And God's house is pre-eminently the house of prayer—that is, of *communion with God*, in thankful adoration and praise, in supplication, in the believing reception of truth and promise, and in the participation of sacramental provision and privilege. *B.*

8. He who gathers the outcasts of Israel to Himself will also gather the outcast Gentiles as well. Would He not herein signify His special pleasure in gathering outcast ones—those who are ostracized by the pride or selfishness of man, but are for that reason only the more welcome to the compassionate sympathy of the Infinite Father ? *H. C.*

All may come ; all may have the assurance that their offering will be acceptable. The whole world lies on a level before God in regard to its origin, for God "has made of one blood all the nations of men to dwell on the face of all the earth" (Acts 18 : 26). The whole race is on a level in regard to moral character, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And the whole race is on a level in regard to redemption, for the same Saviour died for all ; there is the same Spirit to sanctify all ; the same heaven is offered to all ; and the same eternal and most blessed God is ready to admit all to His favor, and to confer on all everlasting life. What thanks do we owe to the God of grace for the blessings of the eternal Gospel ; and how deeply anxious should we be that the offers of salvation should in fact be made known to all men ! The wide world may be saved, and there is not one of the human race so degraded in human estimation by rank, or color, or ignorance who may not be admitted to the same heaven with Abraham and the prophets, and whose prayers and praises would not be as acceptable to God as those of the most magnificent monarch who ever wore a crown. Come the day then when all nations shall hear the glad tidings of salvation ; and when the offers of eternal redemption shall be made to all the dwellers on the earth. *Barnes.*

9. We have here simply one of those alternations and transitions which are not only frequent in this book, but one of its characteristics, and indeed essential to the writer's purpose of exhibiting God's dealing with His Church both in wrath and mercy. From the foregoing promises of growth, He now reverts to intervening judgments and their causes. A.—This abrupt change of subject, from Gospel promise made to outcasts, foreigners and men deemed unclean, to the announcement of devouring ruin upon a class whose watchmen are blind and whose shepherds are ignorant, sensual and selfish, can be accounted for only upon the supposition that the prophet has a mission to two classes who are morally the antipodes of each other ; the one class honestly fearing and seeking God ; the other, apostate, judiciously blinded, and near the point of being rejected of God as incorrigible. These two classes constituted the nominally Jewish community at the Saviour's advent. H. C.

10. "Watchman" is another term for "shepherd," referring here to the religious teachers of the Lord's people—scribes, Pharisees, doctors of the law, and at an earlier age the false

prophets and corrupt priests. They are blind, mentally and spiritually—a fact to which Isaiah repeatedly refers. H. C.—They feed not the flock, but fleece it. They are every one looking to his own way, minding his own private interests, and have no regard at all to the public welfare ; it was Paul's complaint of the watchmen in his time (Phil. 2 : 21), "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." Every one is for propagating his own opinion, advancing his own party, raising his own family and having everything to his own mind, while the common concerns of the public are wretchedly neglected and postponed. They look every one to his gain from his quarter, from his end or part of the work, they are for gain from every quarter. H.

11, 12. The description drops the figure of the dog after the first clause, and speaks of the same religious leaders as themselves shepherds who are void of just understanding ; supremely selfish ; fearfully, disgustingly sensual ; given to strong drink, and spending the live-long night and even the next day in the long-protracted debaucheries of beastly intoxication. H. C.

12. They were secure and confident of the continuance of their prosperity and ease ; they said, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant ; we shall have as much to spend upon our lusts to-morrow as we have to-day." They had no thought at all of their own frailty and mortality, though they were shortening their days and hastening their deaths by their excesses. They had no dread of the judgments of God, though they were daily provoking Him and making themselves liable to His wrath and curse. They never considered the uncertainty of all the delights and enjoyments of sense, how they perish in the using and pass away with the lusts of them. They resolved to continue in this wicked course whatever their consciences said to the contrary, to be as merry to-morrow as they are to-day. "But boast not thyself of to-morrow, when perhaps this night thy soul shall be required of thee." H.

Whoever may order our lives for us, it is very certain that the ordering of them is not left in *our* hands. If it were, our emotions would be more simple, our conditions more stable and more constant ; we should abide in prosperity, our joy would be unmixed with grief. As it is, we live in a constant flux of change. We know not what a day may bring forth. Almost all we know of to-morrow is that it will *not* be as to-day ; it may be more abundant,

but its abundance is just as likely to be burdensome and painful to us as it is to be helpful and invigorating. To-day we may be clothed in garments of heaviness, to-morrow we may exchange them for the robes of mirth. To-day we try with trembling lips to frame some words of comfort for those who mourn an irreparable loss; to-morrow our lips run over with laughter and utter good wishes for those who sit at the very climax of joy and hope.

Cor.

We are prone to look at the future as if it all were within our power. We plan for earthly happiness, as if our own purpose were omnipotent. And even sore experience does not teach us that our arm reaches but a little distance and that we are subject to a governing power, which employs us as the potter does the clay. Of the majority of the schemes and enterprises which engage the solicitude of the busy world, it may be said, they include no thought of providence. The worldly mind and even the Christian mind under wrong influences continues its way as if self-sufficient. "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant."

J. W. A.

These words may be used so as to make them

the utterance of a sober certainty which will not be put to shame. When we turn our hope away from earth to God and fill the future with the light of His presence and the certainty of His truth, the mists and doubts roll away, the future is as certain as the past, and hope as assured of its facts as memory. For we have an unchanging and inexhaustible God, and He is the true guarantee of the future for us. To-day's health may be to-morrow's sickness, to-day's happy companionship of love to-morrow's aching solitude of heart; but to-day's God will be to-morrow's God, to-day's Christ will be to-morrow's Christ. . . . Then let each new day find in us a deeper love, a more perfect consecration and more joyful service, and so in all the beauties of the Christian soul and in all the blessings of the Christian life "to-morrow shall be as this day and much more abundant." . . . That will be the sublimest application of this text when, dying, we can calmly be sure that though to-day be on this side and to-morrow on the other bank of the black river, there will be no break in the continuity, but only an infinite growth in our life, and heaven's to-morrow shall be as earth's to-day, and much more abundant. A. M.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LVII.

- 57:1** The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil *to come*.
2 He entereth into peace; they rest in their beds, each one that walketh in his uprightness.
3 But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore.
4 Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue? are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood, ye that inflame yourselves among the oaks, under every green tree; that slay the children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks? Among the smooth *stones* of the valley is thy portion; they, they are thy lot: even to them hast thou poured a drink offering, thou hast offered an oblation.
7 Shall I be appeased for these things? Upon a high and lofty mountain hast thou set thy bed: thither also wentest thou up to offer sacrifice. And behind the doors and the posts hast thou set up thy memorial: for thou hast discovered *thyself* to another than me, and art gone up; thou hast enlarged thy bed, and made thee a covenant with them; thou lovedst their bed where thou sawest it. And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thine ambassadors far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell. Thou wast wearied with the length of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou didst find a quickening of thy strength; therefore thou wast not faint. And of whom hast thou been afraid and in fear, that thou liest, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of long time, and thou fearest me not?
12, 13 I will declare thy righteousness; and as for thy works, they shall not profit thee. When

thou criest, let them which thou hast gathered deliver thee ; but the wind shall take them, a breath shall carry them all away : but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain. And he shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people.

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy : I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth : for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him, I hid *my face* and was wroth : and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him : I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips : Peace, peace, to him that is far off and to him that is near, saith the LORD ; and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea ; for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

Chap. 57. This chapter is evidently closely connected in sense with chap. 56 : 9-12. In the closing part of the last chapter the prophet had said that the land of Israel would be invaded by foreign armies represented under the image of ravening beasts come to devour. One of the causes of this he had also stated—to wit : the general licentiousness, avarice and intemperance of the rulers of the nation. The same general subject is pursued in this chapter. The prophet states specifically the sins of the nation at large—evidently as a reason why the calamities of the foreign invasion were coming upon them. It is probable that the chapter has primary reference to the times of Manasseh. It was a time of persecution and blood. The righteous were put to death ; the public service of God was profaned and desecrated ; and the evils of idolatry were seen and felt, under the royal patronage, throughout the land. Yet notwithstanding this, the nation was stupid and insensible. They were not affected as they should have been by the fact that the righteous were cut off by persecution, and that idolatry was patronized throughout the land. A few, like the prophets, felt, and deeply felt. Their hearts were desponding, and their spirits drooped. To encourage them, and to rebuke the mass of the stupid and guilty nation, was the design of this chapter. *Barnes.*

The case of the corrupt portion of God's ancient people is the theme through the greater part of this chapter, which therefore stands in close connection with verses 9-12 of the chapter previous. From the judgments which fall on the wicked the righteous are removed by a peaceful death and go to their rest (verses 1, 2) ; wicked men contemning the righteous, are themselves really worthy of contempt (verses 3, 4) ; their idolatry is put in literal terms

(verses 5, 6) ; and then in figurative (verses 7-9). They had persisted in their sin the more fearlessly because God had been extremely forbearing (verses 10-12) ; but judgments must come and test the value of their helpers (verse 13). The trustful in God shall find help in Him through His great condescension and mercy (verses 13-19) ; but only unrest and sorrow will be the lot of the wicked (verses 20, 21). *H. C.*

1. See the blessedness of the righteous : they are "taken away from the evil." The Lord doeth this for them because He loves them. The words *to come* are not in the original. They are taken from all present evil. They are taken from an evil nature : this is the grief and burden of their righteous souls from day to day ; but the death of the body shall quite destroy the body of sin and death ; they shall drop this body, and wing their way to endless glory. They are taken from the evil of sin : though this did not reign over them, yet it raged in them ; though they were not under its dominion, yet it warred in their members and made them cry out, Oh, wretched ! Sin brought death into the world : death shall be the grave of sin : the righteous is not taken away in his sins, but from the evil of them. They are taken from that evil of evils, unbelief. From all the evil of this present world, from all pains, trials and afflictions, of whatever kind, we shall be forever delivered. This is the negative blessedness of the righteous. Who shall describe their positive happiness ? It hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive what the Lord hath prepared for them who love Him : this we must die fully to know. O love the Lord, all ye His saints. *William Mason.*

2. This seems to be added as a kind of after-

thought, to limit what immediately preceeds, and preclude its application to all the dead without distinction. The peace and rest here meant are those of the body in the grave and of the soul in heaven; the former being frequently referred to as a kind of pledge and adumbration of the latter. A.—**Walked in uprightness.** This is literally; “the man walking straightforward,” in the moral sense. The passage shows conclusively that the prophets of Isaiah’s age knew of an after life of blessedness for the righteous, but for the righteous only. H. C.

Let all people “mark the perfect man and behold the upright,” take notice that “the end of that man is peace.” They that walk in their uprightness while they live shall enter into peace when they die. A peaceful death has concluded the troublesome life of many a good man; and all is well that thus ends everlastingly well. H.—It is true that the dying saint “goes in peace.” He has calmness *in his dying*, as well as peace *in his grave*. He leaves the world in peace. He forgives all who have injured him; prays for all who have persecuted him; and peacefully and calmly dies. He lies in a peaceful grave—often represented in the Scriptures as a place of repose, where the righteous “sleep” in the hope of being awakened in the morning of the resurrection. He enters into the rest of heaven—the world of perfect and eternal repose. No persecution comes there; no trial awaits him there; no calamity shall meet him there. Thus in all respects the righteous leave the world in peace; and thus death ceases to be a calamity, and this most dreaded of all evils is turned into the highest blessing. *Barnes.*

We ought not to think of those whom we have loved and lost as if they had gone, carrying with them declining powers, and still bearing the marks of this inevitable law of stagnation and then of decay, under which they groaned here. Think of them rather as having, if they sleep in Jesus, reversed all this, as having carried with them, indeed, all the gifts of matured experience and ripened wisdom which the slow years brings, but likewise as having left behind all the weariness of accomplished aims, the monotony of a formed character, the rigidity of limbs that have ceased to grow. Think of them as receiving again from the hands of Christ much of which they were robbed by the lapse of years. Think of them as then crowned with loving-kindness and satisfied with good, so that their youth is renewed like the eagle’s. Think of them as again joy-

ous, with the joy of beginning a career, which has no term but the sum of all perfection in the likeness of the infinite God. They rise like the song-bird, aspiring to the heavens, circling round, and ever higher, which “singing still doth soar, and soaring ever singeth”—up and up through the steadfast blue to the sun! They shall lose the marks of age as they grow in eternity, and they who have stood before the throne the longest shall be likest Him who sat in the sepulchre young with immortal strength, radiant with unwithering beauty. A. M.

3, 4. The speaker turns suddenly to accost the wicked. The English version fails to do full justice to the force of this transition. The Hebrew reads literally, “And *you*—draw ye near hither;” the word “you” being made emphatic. Are not ye yourselves far more contemptible than those you condemn? To show this yet more clearly, he proceeds to describe their idolatrous habits, than which nothing could be more worthy of contempt. H. C.

5-8. The minute description of idolatry given in this passage is exceedingly perplexing to those writers who fix the date of composition at the period of the exile. Hendewerk makes one concession really valuable—viz., that the efforts of Gesenius and Hitzig to reconcile the terms of the description with the state of things during the captivity are wholly abortive. A perfect solution of the difficulty is afforded by our own hypothesis, that the prophet, from the whole field of vision spread before him, singles out the most revolting traits and images by which he could present in its true aspect the guilt and madness of apostasy from God. A.

9. A reference to efforts to secure foreign alliances. These alliances were closely related to idolatry both because they involved apostasy from the true God to other nations and to their idol gods for help, and because they naturally opened the door for introducing among themselves the gods of other nations. H. C.

10. Thou hast tried all ways to save thyself from the evils that threaten thee: with what pains didst thou court the favor of foreign princes! and to no purpose; yet thou didst not refrain: “thou hast found the life of thine hand”—that is, thou hast made a shift by these methods to support thyself for the present, therefore thou hast felt no remorse. *Bp. Wilson.*

Either by the aid which they had obtained from foreign alliances, or by the gratification experienced in the service of idols, they had found so much to uphold them that they had not been in utter despair, and had not been led

to seek God. And the passage may teach the general truth, that notwithstanding all the trials and disappointments of life, still worldly souls find *so much* comfort in the ways of sin that they are not utterly prostrated and overwhelmed in despair. They still find the "life of their hand in them." If a plan fails they repeat it, or they try another. In the pursuits of ambition, of wealth and of fashion, notwithstanding all the expense and irksomeness, and disappointment, and care, they find *a kind* of pleasure which sustains them, and *enough* success to prompt them to renewed efforts and to keep them from returning to God. They wander from object to object; they become weary in the pursuit, yet they do not abandon it; they still cling to hope though often repulsed—and though the world gives them no permanent comfort—though wealth, and ambition, and gayety, and vice all fail in imparting the happiness which they sought, yet they do not give it up in despair. They still feel that it is to be found in some other way than by the disagreeable necessity of returning to God, and they wander from object to object, and from land to land, and become exhausted in the pursuit, and are worn down by age, and still are not ready to say, "There is no hope, we give it up in despair, and we will now seek happiness in God." The world is still pursued with just as little success, with increased exhaustion, with continually augmenting evidence that it cannot meet and satisfy the desires of the undying soul, and with just as much reluctance to seek permanent bliss in God. *Barnes.*

11. Have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?—that is, And *therefore* thou fearest me not? Sinners take encouragement to continue in sin from God's patience and long-suffering. *W. Lowth.*

12. This language seems ironical, inasmuch as her righteousness was only outrageous iniquity. The sentiment is, Thy righteousness, such as it is, I will set plainly before thee, a righteousness that shall profit thee nothing, but shall only bring a curse upon thy guilty head.

13. When thou criest out in the panic of appalling fear, then let thy foreign gods, troops and all other helpers whatsoever rush to thy help. All will be in vain, for the wind shall bear them all away, yea a breath (vanity) shall take them. They fly like chaff before the whirlwind. But mark the contrast. He who puts his trust in Me shall have Canaan for his inheritance and My holy mountain for his home and possession. These expressions bear a

wealth of precious meaning. Consider how the pilgrim travellers, forty years in the wilderness, learned the significance of possessing the land of promise, and how it became to them an image of the heavenly country. *H. C.*

Trust in Me shall possess. Trust in a Divine person, not only for the forgiveness of sins, but for every good that He bestows and man needs; not in His grace alone, but as well in His providence; in the end and also in the way thither; in the Divine constitution and order of things; in that fatherly care of God which comprehends all our wants and ways—this is our rest and strength, through which we may have such hold of the universe as to make "all things" ours. *O. E. Daggett.*

14. The idea is, that the obstacles should be removed from the path of those who put their trust in God. The *language* is derived from the return from the exile, as if persons should go before them, and should cry, "Cast ye up," etc.; or as if the cry of the people all along their journey should be, "Remove the obstacles to their return." This cry is often heard before the coming of a distinguished prince or conqueror in the East. The Rev. Joseph Wolf stated in a lecture in Philadelphia (September 18th, 1837), that on entering Jerusalem from the west, in the direction of Gaza, the road for a considerable distance from Jerusalem was so full of stones that it was impracticable to ride, and those who were entering the city were obliged to dismount. When the Pacha (Ibrahim, son of Mohammed Ali) approached Jerusalem, it was customary for a considerable number of laborers to go before him and remove the stones from the way. This was done amid a constant cry, "Cast up, cast up the way. Remove the stones, remove the stones." And on a placard or standard it was written, "The Pacha is coming," and everywhere the cry was heard, "The Pacha is coming, cast up the way; remove the stones." *Barnes.*

This prophecy, in design as well as fact, is perfectly unlimited to any one event or period, yet perfectly defined as a description of God's mode of dealing with His Church and with those who, although in it, are not of it. *A.*—The sentiment is, There shall be a call to clear the way for the true people of God to come out from among the wicked before Divine judgments shall crush and exterminate them. Prophetically its outlook may be to that sifting process which severed the true Israel from the false before the final destruction of the nation by the Romans. Or, with a less specific application it may teach in general that God's true

children are forewarned and will be providentially aided to come out from among the incorrigibly wicked before they meet their fearful doom. H. C.

15. Here the light and hope of the Gospel dawns once more amid the threatenings. Mercy and grace to the humble and contrite forms the message in the first beatitudes, and the great law of Gospel promise. *Birks.*

You need not hesitate to trust the promise which is involved in this command, for the High and Holy One has made the following solemn declaration. The same two epithets are joined in chap. 6 : 1, which is regarded by the modern critics as the oldest extant composition of the genuine Isaiah. A.—These are indeed sublime conceptions of the glorious God making eternity His dwelling place ; exalted high above all creatures ; rejoicing in the name “Holy” as best expressing His infinite purity and never sullied excellence ; but representing Him, though so high and holy, as yet condescending to dwell with the contrite and the lowly of earth for the special purpose of reviving their spirit and comforting their heart. His people may trust Him none the less because He is the High and Exalted One, inhabiting eternity, rejoicing in the name “Holy,” *for*, though so high, and withal so pure, yet He dwells with the humble and lowly none the less for this, but rather the more surely and the more graciously. H. C.

Eternity, magnificent as it is, never was without an Inhabitant. Eternity means nothing by itself. It merely expresses the existence of the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth it. We make a fanciful distinction between eternity and time—there is no real distinction. We are in eternity at this moment. That has begun to be with us which never began with God. Our only measure of time is by the succession of ideas. It is not so with God. There is no succession of ideas with Him. Every possible idea is present with Him now. It was present with Him ten thousand years ago. God’s dwelling-place is that eternity which has neither past nor future, but one vast, immeasurable present.

There is a second measure given us of God in this verse. It is in respect of space. He dwelleth in the high and lofty place. He dwelleth, moreover, in the most insignificant place—even the heart of man. And the idea by which the prophet would here exhibit to us the greatness of God is that of His eternal omnipresence. It is difficult to say which conception carries with it the greatest exaltation—that of boundless space or that of unbounded time. If every

other trace of Deity has been expunged by the fall, these two, at least, defy destruction—the thought of eternal time and the thought of immeasurable space.

The third measure which is given us of God respects His character. His name is Holy. The chief idea which this would convey to us is separation from evil. Brethren, there is a time drawing near when those of us who shall stand at His right hand, purified from all evil taint, shall be able to comprehend absolutely what is meant by the holiness of God. At present, with hearts cleaving down to earth, and tossed by a thousand gusts of unholy passion, we can only form a dim conception *relatively* of that which it implies. None but the pure can understand purity. The chief knowledge which we have of God’s holiness comes from our acquaintance with unholiness. We know what impurity is—God is *not* that. We know what injustice is—God is *not* that. We know what restlessness, and guilt, and passion are, and deceitfulness, and pride, and waywardness—all these we know. God is none of these. And this is our chief acquaintance with His character. We know what God is *not*. We scarcely can be rightly said to know—that is, to feel, what God *is*. And therefore this is implied in the very name of holiness. Holiness in the Jewish sense means simply separateness. From all that is wrong, and mean, and base, our God is forever separate. *F. W. Robertson.*

“The High and Lofty One *dwells with him* who is of a contrite and humble spirit ;” and the end of His dwelling there is to “revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones ;” by His sweet influences the lowly to exalt and the bruised to heal. True Christians are His “*temples*,” and He “dwells and walks *in them*.” They have worshipping and adoring thoughts of Him, and keep up in their hearts sacrifices of prayer and praise, which render their souls fitter temples to Him than even His awful palace in the olden Church. And, then, His “exceeding great and precious promises,” received by faith, make them “*partakers of the Divine nature* ;” not, indeed, of the substance of God, the Divine nature itself, but of “a Divine nature,” a nature *like* God’s, the Divine “image and likeness” recovered. Specially doth Christ “*abide in them*.” A precious Saviour, He “dwells in their hearts *by faith*.” By faith, their hearts sweetly entertain this friend and brother of their souls. By faith, they “*put on Christ*,” with all the fruits of believing, till they stand “conformed to His image,” dressed

both in a robe of righteousness, which He has externally wrought for them, and in a garment of holiness, which they have inwardly caught from among His shining graces. He is, moreover, "*in them*, the hope of glory." Their inmost thoughts, affections and desires do so centre in Him, that they cannot doubt of ultimately sharing with Him the glory to which He is exalted. *J. S. Stone.*

The soul of man was *meant* for all that it is capable of being. And its highest end is to be yielded up to God, that His will may work in it and through it. In a word, it is to be holy as He is holy; it is to be His consecrated, His living temple—His sacred name inscribed on its portal—all the wealth of time and probation a willing sacrifice upon its altar. And how consonant and accordant is this with the majesty of God and the blessedness of man! A living temple! A human spirit within which the Eternal Spirit condescending will deign to dwell! *Gillett.*

Nothing in external worship is dear to Him, where the heart is foreign and alien to Him. There is no place so satisfactory for Him to rest in as the heart of His intelligent creatures; a mind penetrated with a sense of sin, touched with gratitude, glowing with love and prostrating itself in the deepest humiliation before Him, this is the place of his rest, and He bows the heaven itself and comes down to take possession of such a temple as is furnished by the heart of that man. *R. Hall.*

"I dwell with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." There is this distinction between what is great in God and what is great in man. To be independent of everything in the universe is God's glory, and to be independent is man's shame. All that God has, He has from Himself—all that man has, he has from God. And the moment man cuts himself off from God, that moment he cuts himself off from grandeur. In two things the greatness of man consists. One is to have God so dwelling in us as to impart His character to us; and the other is to have God so dwelling in us that we recognize His presence, and know that we are His and He is ours. They are two things perfectly distinct. To *have* God in us, this is salvation; to *know* that God is in us, this is assurance. *F. W. R.*

Christ discloses a second universe in the soul, with its depths of infinite yearning and heights of capability, and shows the greatness that is in man, by touching human nature with the Divine which is in Himself. The man who, with unsealed eyes and humble heart, enters

this new world, perceives a growing grandeur worthy of all that God has done or can do for it—a world that goes forward not to death, but life, and that even now floods all the stars with a purer, tenderer light than the astronomer's tube can reveal. The character of God rises more conspicuously Divine—love softening greatness, and greatness commending love. "The High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, and that dwells in the high and holy place, dwelleth with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." *Ker.*

*Nothing of more serious import can possibly be expressed than what is here declared to us, that no communion between the Holy One and the proud man can ever find a place, but only with the sinner truly penitent. The higher our heart raises itself, the farther He draws back; the deeper our soul abases itself, the lower the hand of mercy is silently stretched forth toward us. Never have we less to fear than when we sink ourselves; never more to hope than when we begin to despair of all save One. "First, when you have really become nothing, can God make anything of you:" the paradox of Luther remains always true and beautiful, but not so beautiful as this passage from Isaiah. He who in such a passage does not hear the voice of God Himself is deaf in spiritual matters. And he who through God's grace not merely receives it, but with trembling hand grasps it as the firm staff of his own support, ever gives thanks anew for it, clings fast to it, pressing forward to the heights which undoubtedly he shall at last attain, though it may well be—only through the depths. *Van O.**

16. The great mercy and compassion of God toward His people are manifested especially in His corrective discipline. He is constrained to "contend" with them in stern displeasure, rebuking them for their iniquity; yet even then His great compassion sets the shortest limit possible. "He will not contend forever," "for He knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust." He takes it into account that no human soul can long endure under His rebuke. *H. C.*

We are not to despair because we have faltered and failed; nor need we write bitter things against ourselves; we are just what others are—erring children of a fallen race. Hence, instead of despairing, repining or hating ourselves, we should patiently endeavor to correct our faults, amend our ways and doings, and above all we should commit the keeping

of our souls unto God in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator. However much we may despise ourselves, we are dear to the heart of God; and He who has bought us with His blood has not paid the wondrous price of our redemption to lose us without a struggle or abandon us because of frailties and infirmities. Let us turn our hearts to Him, and content ourselves to lie low at His feet and passive in His hands, that we may be made vessels unto honor, fitted for the Master's use. *Anon.*

17. The sentiments of the verse are that covetousness is a sin often fearfully prevalent; always most provoking to God; a sin for which He often chastises men, and yet one which His best efforts fail to cure. *H. C.*

18. God takes away a little comfort, that He may make room in the soul for a greater degree of comfort. This, the prophet Isaiah sweetly shows: "*I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners.*" Bear up sweetly, O precious soul! thy storm shall end in a calm, and thy dark night in a sunshiny day. Thy mourning shall be turned into rejoicing, and the waters of consolation shall be sweeter and higher in thy soul than ever. The mercy is surely thine, but the time of giving it is the Lord's. *T. Brooks.*

No human heart, however wounded, continues always to bleed. Some gracious vegetation creeps over the wildest ruin. The roughest edges are smoothed by time. Vitality asserts itself; other interests have a right to be entertained, and are entertained. The recuperative powers come into play, and the pang departs and poignancy is softened. The nightly guest, Sorrow, slips away, and ere we know, another sits in her place. Some of us try to fight against that merciful process, and seem to think that it is a merit to continue, by half artificial means, the first moment of pain, and that it is treason to some dear remembrances to let life have its way, and to-day have its rights. That is to set ourselves against the dealings of God, and to refuse to forgive Him for what His love has done for us.

But another thought seems to me to be even more beautiful—viz., the transformation of the evil, sorrow itself, into the radiant form of joy. A prince comes to a poor man's hovel, is hospitably received in the darkness, and, being received and welcomed, in the morning slips off the rags and appears as he is. Sorrow is Joy disguised. If it be accepted, if the will submit, if the heart let itself be untwined, that its tendrils may be coiled closer round the heart of

God, then the transformation is sure to come, and joy will dawn on those who have done rightly—that is, submissively and thankfully—by their sorrows. It will not be a joy like what the world calls joy—loud-voiced, boisterous, ringing with idiot laughter; but it will be pure, and deep, and sacred, and permanent. A white lily is better than a flaunting peony, and the joy into which sorrow accepted turns is pure and refining and good. All our troubles, big and little, may be converted into gladnesses if we accept them as God meant them. *A. M.*

Nothing doth so establish the mind amid the rollings and turbulency of present things as both a look above them and a look beyond them; above them, to the steady and good hand by which they are ruled; and beyond them, to the sweet and beautiful end to which by that hand they shall be brought. *Leighton.*

19. I create the fruit of the lips.

"The sacrifice of praise," saith Paul (Heb. 13:15), "is the fruit of the lips." God creates this fruit of the lips by giving new subject and cause of thanksgiving by His mercies conferred on those among His people who acknowledge and bewail their transgressions, and return to Him. The great subject of thanksgiving is peace; reconciliation and pardon offered to them that are nigh, and to them that are afar off; not only to the Jew, but also to the Gentile, as Paul more than once applies those terms (Eph. 2:13, 17; see also Acts 2:39). *Bp. Louth.*—The connection of thought in our passage is that His wayward people when brought to repentance by His corrective discipline, so as to be truly broken and humbled in spirit, will have their mouths filled with praise and will be blessed with double peace, both the Gentile afar off and the Jew who is near. "Peace" comprehends all spiritual blessings.

H. C.

Serenity and pure-heartedness are the kind of peace that has most of heaven. It is better than religious *rapture*. The rapture that comes from pardoned guilt is like the fire-rocket that streams and blazes through the black sky, making everything brilliant for a moment and forcing men to look at it; the peace of him that has lived near to God is like the quiet, steady lustre of the lighthouse lamp, startling no one, very easily mistaken for a common light, but never quenched; ever to be found when wanted, casting the same mild ray through the long night across the maddest billows that curl their crests around the rock on which it stands. This is the kind of peace enjoyed by him that is near. *F. W. R.*

The "peace of God" to which the apostle refers with a kind of rapturous confidence is not simply an expression of the soul's relations to the Divine judgment, as justified by the blood of the cross, nor yet is it that harmony of spirit that binds the company of believers together in holy love; but beyond these, yet not excluding them, it is the inward state of the soul renewed by grace, in which the Divine Comforter has taken up His abode, Himself the Author and perpetual source of the soul's deep and quiet confidence in God—a state of mind which, though well known to the conscious subject of it, surpasses human thought in respect to its cause and its sure support. And yet so surely is this peace maintained and defended against all assaults, that the whole spiritual nature—the heart and mind—are kept inviolate, so long as the soul abides in Christ Jesus. And as this result is accomplished in Him, both the peace itself and the accompanying security are His perpetual gifts. We abide in Him, being kept by His gracious power; and in Him is all fullness of grace. So long as the soul's interests are given up to Christ, they are safe beyond all liability to fall, or to be spoiled by the adversary. The Shepherd keeps His own, He leads them in green pastures, and beside the still waters; and none can perish that do not wander from the flock. *D. Curry.*

20, 21. While the souls of the righteous rest in deep repose, trusting in their God forever, the wicked have no true peace at all. Forever restive, never satisfied with either themselves or God; grasping after good they cannot attain, they are forcibly and fitly compared to the restless sea. *H. C.*—When we can once stay our minds on God, we are quiet; but when we must bring God to our mind, and must have God go our pace, or come at our time and work in our way (none of which He will do, what ado soever we make to have it so), oh, how restless and troubled are we, even like the troubled sea when it cannot rest! *Caryl.*

Leave the passions unsubdued, and they turn the soul into a tiger's cage, and man grows up a self-willed, capricious, tyrannic being, uncomfortable himself and uncomfortable to everybody else, always in trouble, and practically an Ishmael, domineering or impetuous, a tyrant or a criminal. Let the individual be left to his appetites, let him be indulged in having whatever he craves, and he will always be governed by his impulses and his thirst for pleasure, till nothing will satisfy him; content will be impossible. He will be uneasy, restless, wretched. *Gillett.*

It is only when these passions are subdued that there *can* be calmness of spirit; and these are effectually subdued only under the influence of religion. Men may learn in some degree to control them by the influence of philosophy; or a pride of character and respect to their station and reputation may enable them in some degree to restrain them, but they are like the smothered fires of the volcano or like the momentary calm of the ocean that a gust of wind may soon lash into foam. To restrain them is not to subdue them; for no man can tell how soon he may be excited by anger or how soon the smothered fires of lust may burn. *Barnes.*

The passion, the desires, the impulses that lead us to do wrong things, are like a crew that mutiny, and take for a moment the wheel from the steersman and the command from the captain, but then, having driven the ship on the rocks, the mutineers get intoxicated and lie down and sleep. Passion fulfils itself, and expires. The desire is satisfied, and it turns into a loathing. The tempter draws us to him, and then unveils the horrid face that lies beneath the mask. When the deed is done and cannot be undone, then comes satiety; then comes the reaction of the fierce excitement, the hot blood begins to flow more slowly; then rises up in the heart conscience; then rises up in majesty in the soul reason; then flashes and flares before the eye the vivid picture of the consequences. His enemy has found the sinner. *A. M.*

Cannot rest. This impossibility of rest arises partly from the soul's own majesty. God made the spirit of man like the ocean in its vastness. It is its own magnificence that makes it intensely miserable. Man's soul rocks and billows itself with an eternity beneath it. It is that which makes human suffering a thing of grandeur, because every pang that contracts a human brow and every quiver that distorts a pale lip are only indications of what may merge into the unresting doom of infinite wail. When God put man in possession of a self, and made that self immortal, He only made him master of a tremendous heritage of woe.

Partly, again, this impossibility of rest comes from the soul's power of being acted upon by heavenly influences and by earthly ones together. The sea rests not because of the attraction of the heavenly bodies, which keep it in an endless ebb and flow—drawn toward the earth and drawn toward the sky alternately, and obeying neither impulse solely, it *cannot* rest. Know we nothing of this in our own

bosoms? There is a tide of feeling which ebbs alternately to heaven and earth. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." We are conscious, surely, of high instincts that tell of God; conscious, besides, of grovelling propensities that drag us down to earth—low wants and lofty longings. So long as these hold man's soul alternately, is rest possible? Nay, one force must overcome the other before that can be. The love of God must master the world's attraction, or if not, then the soul is "like the troubled sea when it cannot rest."

Partly, once more, the impossibility of rest arises from outward circumstances. There are winds that sweep along the ocean's surface and fret it into agitation. A small gust raises a single wave on the surface of the water, and before that wave has passed over a thousand miles it has become a swell which may swamp a navy. Something like this man has to make him restless. Besides his own inborn passions, there are circumstances from without in this world to fret and agitate and discompose his spirit—small trials of temper that make up much of the weariness of life; reverses of fortune; all that men call annoyances and sorrows. And then we lay the blame on these and ask, "How could the man have been otherwise than as he is? He is disappointed, miserable; well, but the circumstances of his earlier years, faulty education, others' neglect, made him so." The man who has not peace in himself cannot get peace from circumstances. Place him where you will, he carries an unquiet heart along with him. Can you keep the ocean from the wind? Can you bid the gust and the hurricane be still, and not play their wild game over the face of the waters? Can you save man from circumstances? Nay. We are here to control the circumstances in which we are placed, and transmute them, and get good and spirituality out of them. It certainly may be true that a man is made restless and miserable by circumstances. It certainly may be that the ocean is ploughed into billows by the tempest blasts, but all that they did was to lash the ocean and show that it was yielding water and not firm rock. All that circumstances have done when they make a man restless is just this, to show that he is not incorporated with the Rock of Ages. *F. W. Robertson.*

It is a certain truth, what this prophet had said before (chap. 48:22), and here repeats (verse 21), "There is no peace to the wicked," no reconciliation to God, nor can they be upon good terms with Him while they go on

still in their trespasses; no quietness or satisfaction in their own mind, no real good, no peace in death, because no hope. "My God hath said it," and all the world cannot unsay it, That there is no peace to those that allow themselves in any sin. What have they to do with peace? H.

The world's peace is the indulgence of the heart as if it were in a state of health—"Let nature have her way;" Christ's peace is the healing of a disordered heart. It does not consist in giving the rein to desires, but in mastering them. It consists in placing the whole soul under the discipline of the cross, and "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." We are "sick to death," sick of our own selfishness and our own unregenerated hearts; and we are here in this world to be cured. These are our only two hopes of rest. The world's peace comes by adding fuel to the fever; Christ's peace comes by curing it. And there is not a man in this congregation who is not resting his faith and his expectation of rest on one of these promises or the other. There is not one who has immersed himself in business, and there is not one who has hidden himself, like Adam, in the trees of this world's garden of enjoyment who does not hope to find in his own way the rest which his spirit needs. Through the path of guilt or through the path of restlessness we are all seeking rest. In life's retirement or in life's bustle it is the same pursuit in different forms. Seek on we must, till we win or miss forever. *F. W. R.*

I am a very strong believer in the punishment of certain kinds of actions, not only in the present, but *in all the future a man can have, be it long or short*. Therefore in hell; for I suppose that all men with a clear sense of right and wrong (and I am not sure that any others deserve such punishment) have now and then "descended into hell" and *stopped there quite long enough to know what infinite punishment means*. And if a genuine, not merely subjective immortality awaits us, I conceive that, without some such change as that depicted in the fifteenth chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians, immortality must be eternal misery. The faith of Swift's Struldbrugs seems to me not more horrible than that of a mind imprisoned forever within the *flammaria* mania of inextinguishable memories. *Huxley.*—Professor Huxley does well to emphasize the awfulness of inextinguishable memories. And yet who shall say the remorse which is the fruit of the memories of evil deeds may not

be the punishment held in reserve for the impenitent and perverse ; and if so who shall declare it to be unjust ? For remorse, born as it is of the memories, carries with it a sense of wilful, deliberate, perverse wickedness which is irremediable. We recall the lines printed in the London *Spectator* some years ago, and which arrested attention at the time. We give two stanzas :

I sat alone with my conscience in a place where time had
ceased,
And we talked of my former living in the land where the
years increased.
The ghosts of forgotten actions came floating before my
sight,
And things that I thought were dead things were alive
with a terrible might ;
The vision of all my past life was an awful thing to
face
Alone with my conscience, sitting in that silently solemn
place.
* * * * *
And now alone with my conscience, in the place where
the years increase,

I try to recall that future in the land where time will
cease ;
And I know of the future judgment, how dreadful so-
e'er it be,
That to sit alone with my conscience will be judgment
enough for me.

Christian at Work.

It is somewhat surprising that the "higher criticism" has not detected in this repetition a marginal gloss or the assimilating hand of some redactor. But even Hitzig zealously contends, without an adversary, that the verse is genuine both here and in chap. 48 : 22, and that its studied repetition proves the unity and chronological arrangement of the whole book. The only wonder is that in a hundred cases more or less analogous the same kind of reasoning is rejected as beneath refutation. This verse, according to the theory of Rückert, Hitzig and Hävernicks, closes the second great division of the later prophecies. A.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LVIII.

58 : 1 CRY aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and declare unto my people
2 their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and de-
light to know my ways ; as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of
3 their God, they ask of me righteous ordinances, they delight to draw near unto God. Where-
fore have we fasted, *say they*, and thou seest not ? *wherefore* have we afflicted our soul, and
thou takest no knowledge ? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find *your own* pleasure, and
4 exact all your labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and contention, and to smite with the fist
5 of wickedness : ye fast not this day so as to make your voice to be heard on high. Is such
the fast that I have chosen ? the day for a man to afflict his soul ? Is it to bow down his
head as a rush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him ? wilt thou call this a fast, and
6 an acceptable day to the LORD ? Is not this the fast that I have chosen ? to loose the bonds
of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye
7 break every yoke ? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor
that are cast out to thy house ? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him ; and that
8 thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ? Then shall thy light break forth as the morn-
ing, and thy healing shall spring forth speedily : and thy righteousness shall go before thee ;
9 the glory of the LORD shall be thy rearward. Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall an-
swer ; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of
10 thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking wickedly ; and if thou draw out
thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul ; then shall thy light rise in darkness,
11 and thine obscurity be as the noonday : and the LORD shall guide thee continually, and sat-
isfy thy soul in dry places, and make strong thy bones ; and thou shalt be like a watered
12 garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of thee
shall build the old waste places : thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations ;
and thou shalt be called The repairer of the breach. The restorer of paths to dwell in.
13 If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day ; and

call the sabbath a delight, *and* the holy of the LORD honourable ; and shalt honour it, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking *thine own* words : then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD ; and I will make thee to ride upon the high places of the earth ; and I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father : for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Chap. 58. Self-righteous formalism is one main evil which grew up among the Jewish people along with open idolatry, and survived it in the times after the return from Babylon. Direct idol worship then almost wholly disappeared. But the other evil, more subtle in its nature, though present from the first, became conspicuous under the second Temple, and reached its height when our Lord began His ministry. After rejecting the Gospel, it hardened into the Talmudical rabbinism of later times. In the visible Church of Christ the succession has been almost the same. The open prevalence of saint and image worship has been followed by a wide prevalence of various forms of lifeless orthodoxy, or zealotry, near akin to the Pharisaism of the Jews in the days of Isaiah. In this chapter we have a distinct warning against this second great evil in the Jewish and Christian churches. *Birks.*

The design of this chapter is to reprove the Jews for a vain dependence on the performance of the outward forms of religion. The nation is represented as diligent in the performance of the external rites of their religion, and as expecting to avert the Divine judgments by the performance of those rites. They are represented as filled with amazement, that though they were thus diligent and faithful, yet they had no tokens of the Divine approbation, but were left as if forsaken by God. The main scope of the chapter is to show the reason why their religious services met with no tokens of the Divine acceptance, and the way in which they might obtain His favor, and the blessings which would follow the proper performance of their duties. *Barnes.*

This is a chapter on hypocrites, the special type or class being those who combine the apparently self-denying formalities of religion with the most self-indulgent and heartless oppression of their fellow-creatures. Since the Jewish nation as a whole professed to be the people of God, apostates in heart would often be hypocrites, keeping up the forms of religion after they had utterly lost its spirit, and indeed making special account of its forms as a means of obtaining God's favor—a cover to their sin and an indulgence for its more safe and free commission. Against such hypocrites, the

stern rebukes of this chapter are thundered forth. The prophet is commanded to proclaim aloud to this class of people their sins ; to set before them the very spirit of their ceremonial religion and of their oppressive life ; to show them what religious worship is and what sort of life pleases God ; and to promise them that, living so, their blessings should be unbounded.

1. Earnestness and not vociferation is the spirit of this direction to the prophet. As applied to preachers of the Gospel, this distinction is sensible, and should not be lost sight of. Effectiveness should be studied. H. C.—Gospel ministers should not only be like dials on watches, or mile-stones upon the road, but like clocks and larums, to sound the alarm to sinners. Aaron wore bells as well as pomegranates, and the prophets were divinely commanded to lift up their voice like a trumpet. A sleeping sentinel may be the loss of a city. *Bp. H.*

2. This verse describes them as professing to seek God and even as pretending to inquire after justice and righteousness—the very principles which they most of all outraged and trampled under foot in their oppressive ways of life. H. C.—The main feature is a pretended eagerness to learn the commands and will of God, as shown in ceremonial details, and still a neglect of the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. *Birks.*

A hypocrite has no true and real delight in the service of God or in His truth, but it is true at the same time that there may be a great deal of *professed* interest in the ways of God. There may be a great deal of busy and bustling solicitude about the *order* of religious services. There may be a great deal of pleasure in theological discussion ; in the metaphysics of theology ; in the defence of what is deemed orthodoxy. There may be a great deal of pleasure in the mere *music* of devotion. There may be pleasure in the pleasant voice of a preacher, and in his eloquence and the power of his arguments. And there may be a great deal of pleasure in the triumphs of *party* ; the advancement of the denomination to which we are attached ; the conversion of men not *from sin*, but from a side opposite to us, and not *to holiness and to God*, but to our party and denomination. True delight in religion is *in religion itself* ; in the

service of God as such, and because it is holy. It is not mere pleasure in creeds, and liturgies, and theological discussions, and in the triumph of our cause, *nor even in the triumph of Christianity as a mere party measure*; but it is delight in God as He is, in His holy service, and in His truth. *Barnes.*

3. Their fasting was wholly an external thing, an affliction of the body and not a humbling of the soul. God's answer is, In the very days of your fasting, ye are as oppressive and exacting as ever. Ye seek your own selfish pleasures on these days in which ye profess to be so religious toward Me. In God's view their days of fasting should have been days of humiliation for those monstrous sins. But *they* meant no such thing. They only hoped to make these days a substitute for the duties of justice and kindness; an atonement for the sins of injustice and oppression—a substitution which God utterly abhorred! . . . Ye *will not*, by such fasting as this, make your prayer reach heaven. Fasting like yours on these days will not carry your voice up to the pure throne above. H. C.

The idea seems to be that they were at that time rigid and oppressive in exacting all that was due to them; they relaxed nothing of their griping demands of those who were under them; they remitted nothing, they forgave nothing. There was no kindness shown to the poor; to the laboring classes; to those who were in their employ; to those who were indebted to them; to those who had injured or offended them. Alas, how often is this still true! Men may be most diligent in the external duties of religion; most abundant in fasting and in prayer, and at the same time most rigorous and unyielding in demanding all that is due to them. Like Shylock—another Jew like those in the time of Isaiah—they may demand “the pound of flesh,” at the same time that they may be most formal, punctual, precise and bigoted in the performance of the external duties of religion. The sentiment taught here is, that if we desire to keep a fast that shall be acceptable to God, it must be such as shall make us kind, mild, benignant; such as shall have the effect to cause us to unbind heavy burdens from the poor, and to lead us to relax the rigidity of the claims which would be oppressive on those who are subject to us. (See verse 6.) *Barnes.*

5. The second member of the first clause is not part of the contemptuous description of a mere external fast, but belongs to the definition of a true one, as a time for men to practise self-humiliation. He does not ask whether the fast

which he chooses is a day for a man to afflict himself, implying that it is not, which would be destructive of the very essence of a fast; but he asks whether the fast which he has chosen as a time for men to humble and afflict themselves is such as this—*i.e.*, a mere external self-abasement. A.—Is *my* fast day like this of yours—mine, the day of my choice, being a day for a man to afflict and humble his *soul* and not his body merely? Is this the same thing as bowing down the head like a bulrush, and making one's bed of sackcloth and ashes? Will ye account the latter to be a real fast and a day acceptable to God? H. C.

The bowing of the head refers to the affected seriousness, the sanctimoniousness of a hypocrite when fasting—a man without real feeling who puts on an air of affected solemnity and “appears to others to fast.” Against that the Saviour warned *His* disciples, and directed them when they fasted to do it in their ordinary dress and to maintain an aspect of cheerfulness. The hypocrites in the time of Isaiah seemed to suppose that the object was gained if they assumed this affected seriousness. Nothing more injures the cause of true religion than sanctimoniousness, affected seriousness, gloom, reserve, coldness and the conduct and deportment which, whether right or wrong, will be construed by those around us into gloom and misanthropy. Be it not forgotten that the seriousness which religion produces is always consistent with cheerfulness, and is always accompanied by benevolence. *Barnes.*

6. The terms are so selected as to be descriptive of oppression universally; to make which still more evident, the prophet adds a general command or exhortation, Ye shall break every yoke. A.—This is God's idea of a fast for oppressors—*viz.*, a day for them to loosen bands wickedly imposed. This condemnation of oppression is very broad—“break every yoke.” No matter by what law, whether municipal, or merely social or even parental, any of our fellow-creatures fall in any measure under our power, let us see to it that our hand upon them becomes not a yoke; our authority not a crushing bondage. H. C.

When God saith, “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice” (Hos. 6:6), the meaning is, that mercy is to be preferred before sacrifice. Just thus the prophet speaks of fasting here, as a thing, in itself, of little or no use to show how much mercy is to be preferred, without which fasting will not avail anything. *W. Louth.*

What God desires in you and me is not certain forms, services, emotions, the saying of prayers

and the like ; it is a renewal of the whole nature — of the inner and the outer man. Away with the thought that haunts so many, that the work of Christ is some cunningly devised plan for enabling men to get to heaven without righteousness. It is rather the divinely simple and yet marvellously successful plan for making men, not merely by imputation or proxy, but in themselves and in fact, holy, pure, godlike and fit for heaven. *J. Ogle.*

Life is a vineyard. Its business is a task. We are set down in a field white already to harvest. Humanity has wrongs to be righted, and oppressions to be lifted off. Bargains are to be made immaculate. Lusts are to be quenched. Selfishness is to be softened. In a word, faith is to bear fruit a hundredfold, and piety to lead a moral life. Otherwise, the whole head of faith is sick, and the whole heart of piety is faint. This every-day, familiar, working religion, the religion of little things, is Christianity. *F. D. H.*

7. The Scriptures throughout both the Old Testament and the New give great and deserved prominence to these duties of broad, deep, practical sympathy with the suffering and the friendless. (See Isa. 32 : 6 ; Job 31 : 16-32 ; Ezek. 18 : 7, 8 ; Prov. 22 : 9 ; Ps. 112 : 9 ; Matt. 25 : 35, 36 ; Rom. 12 : 13 ; Heb. 13 : 2, 3, and James 2 : 15, 16.) *H. C.*

The blessed God is the most benevolent because He is the best of beings ; and this is one test of the reality of our religion : if it has made us new creatures, it has made us humane ; if it has made us partakers of the Divine nature, it has made us kind and communicative ; if it has made us Christlike, it has made us like one who went about continually doing good. And for this softness of feeling, for this susceptibility to human suffering, I know not of any substitute, for I know nothing which will prove a man to be godly, if you can prove him still to be selfish. But if humanity is a grace of God's Spirit, if in its truest, widest sense it is a Heaven-implemented principle, it none the less needs careful culture. Not only does it need to be wisely regulated, but more harm than good is done by its largesses, precipitate and promiscuous ; but it needs to be constantly refreshed and fostered, lest it die away. *Hamilton.*

We owe other people service. Service goes with loving. We cannot love truly and not serve. Love without serving is but an empty sentiment, a poor mockery. God so loved the world that He gave. Love always gives. The world is very full of sorrow and trial, and we

cannot live among our fellow-men and be true without sharing their loads. If we are happy, we must hold the lamp of our happiness so that its beams will fall upon the shadowed heart. If we have no burden, it is our duty to put our shoulders under the load of others. Selfishness must die, or else our own heart's life must be frozen within us. We soon learn that we cannot live for ourselves and be Christians ; that the blessings that are given to us are really for other people ; and that we are only God's ministers to carry them in Christ's name to those for whom they were intended. *J. R. Miller.*

We are under the obligation of love, as interpreted by the Eternal Son of God in His voluntary sacrifice for man's redemption. He came to give His life a ransom for many. The law that the strong *ought* to bear the infirmities of the weak is no mere temporary enactment, imposed for disciplinary ends ; it has its origin in the essential life of God, and its most impressive illustration in the ministry and mediation of Jesus Christ. Love must be both intelligent and righteous. It does not bear the infirmities of the weak simply for the sake of bearing them. It summons us to please our neighbors only for their good to edification. It is not every wish that we are to gratify. It is not every weakness that we are to condone. We are to seek our neighbor's upbuilding in all that is good. We are so to bear his infirmities that he may shortly be able to walk alone, and be helpful to others. The principle of love is justified to the reason by the high doctrine, appearing in the very first pages of the Bible, articulate in all its subsequent utterances, most impressively illustrated in the incarnation, and solemnly sealed in the resurrection from the dead and the ascension into glory : that man, though framed in body of the dust of earth, is the heir of eternity and the child of God. Sadly has he fallen, but he is not beyond rescue. He cannot be what he ought to be, and what he may be, until the grace of Christ has renewed and sanctified him ; and therefore love impels to any sacrifice and endeavor that may place this grace within his reach. *Behrends.*

Even kindness may be overdone when it leads to *over-helping*. We need to guard against meddling with God's discipline, softening the experience that He means to be hard, sheltering our friend from the wind that He intends to blow chillingly. All summer does not make a good zone to live in ; we need autumn and winter to temper the heat and keep vegetation from luxuriant overgrowth. The best thing we can

do for others is not always to take their load or do their duty for them.

"Our friends," says Emerson, "are those who make us do what we can." Says another writer: "Our real friend is not the man or woman who smooths over our difficulties, throws a cloak over our failings, stands between us and the penalties which our mistakes have brought upon us; but the man or woman who makes us understand ourselves and helps us to better things." Too often our friendship is short-sighted in this regard, and most hurtful to those we fervently desire to aid. We should never indulge or encourage weakness in others when we can in any way stimulate it into strength. We should never do anything for another which we can inspire him to do for himself. Much parental affection errs at this point. Children are sometimes sheltered when it were better if they faced the storm. They are saved from toil and exertion when toil and exertion are God's ordained means of grace for them, of which parents rob them in their over-tenderness. Even in the sacredness of sorrow we should never forget that our mission to others is not merely to weep with them, but to help them to be victorious, to receive their sorrow as a messenger from God, and to bear themselves as God's children under it. Instead, therefore, of mere emotional condolence with our friends in their times of grief, we should seek to present to them the strong comforts of Divine love, and to inspire them to the bearing of their sorrow in faith and hope and love.

So all personal helpfulness should be wise and thoughtful. It should never tend to pamper weakness, to encourage dependence, to make people timid, to debilitate manliness and womanliness. We must take care that our helping does not dwarf any life which we ought rather to stimulate to noble and beautiful growth. God never makes such mistakes as this. He never fails us in need; but He loves us too well and is too wise to relieve us of weights which we need to make our growth healthful and vigorous. We should learn from God, and should help as He helps, without ever overhelping. J. R. M.

We are certainly not wrong if, with God's Bible in our hands, we urge that the religion that is revived shall revive with it honesty, fair dealing, veracity, chastity, plain living and faithful work; shall bring on a new epoch of duty—courageous, clean-handed, sweet-hearted duty, irreproachable and incorruptible—fearing God and keeping His commandments. F. D. H.

—Isaiah and his brother prophets were holier,

and heavenlier, and richer in the works of love, upon an anticipated Christ, than we are in a Christ already our crucified example. These men of God knew no divorce between belief and love; between living perpetually in the presence of a benevolent Lord and imitating His benevolence to their fellow-creatures! W. A. B.

Manifestly for the purpose of giving the highest possible force and solemnity to that sense of obligation which impels the Christian to abound in every good work, the ostensible proof of religious sincerity, to be adduced in the momentous procedures of the last judgment, is made to consist in the fact of a life of beneficence. Those, and those only, shall inherit the prepared blessedness who shall be found to have nourished, and clothed, and visited the Lord in His representatives—the poor. The "cursed" are those who have grudged the cost of mercy. I. Taylor.

Experience demonstrates that the heart which responds to the cries of a world perishing through lack of knowledge is the heart which most readily thrills at the cry of bodily want; that those who care most for the souls of the heathen are among the most active agents of patriotic and local charities; that genuine Christian charity, while it leaves no object unattempted on account of its vastness, overlooks none on account of its minuteness. In this respect, it copies the example of Him who, in His way to the cross to save a world, often stood still to give health to the sick, and to wipe away the tears of the mourner; sowing at each step the seeds of those various institutions of mercy which are still springing up in His Church. Harris.—Remember that your stewardship here is not for long. Use carefully and lovingly the things that God has given you. And when it comes time for you to depart, may there be many hearts here that shall be orphaned by your going, and many waiting hearts there that shall be gladdened by your coming. C. H. P.

Our Lord has done more than to remove all limitations from the law of neighborly service. He has also introduced a new measure and motive for its obedience. "A new commandment," He said, "I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye love one another." Christ's love for us is to be the measure and the motive of our love for our fellow-men. Here we have the ultimate test by which we may judge the quality of our neighborly regard. The old law said, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself;" Christ changes the rule by saying, "Love your neigh-

bor as *I love you*." And therein is at least a sixfold command. You are to love your neighbor *rationally*, because he is a man for whom Christ died. You are to love him *impartially*, seeing that Christ is the friend of sinners. You are to love him *passionately*, your inmost heart on fire with holy affection. You are to love him *patiently*, imitating Him who is slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. You are to love him *righteously*, intent on making him an heir of holiness, because Christ came to save men from their sins. And as all holiness is based on a keen sense of personal responsibility, it follows that you can love your neighbor righteously only as you wake in him the sense of *personal energy*, and urge him to the cultivation of a vigorous, rounded, Christian manhood. The very best thing you can do for the extirpation of pauperism, of ignorance, of intemperance, lust and crime, is so to multiply your missionary agencies that the Gospel of Christian manhood shall be brought to every man's door. Pure hearts will make clear heads, and strong hands, and temperate men and women; and under the silent ministry of holiness the world's tyrannies and miseries would speedily disappear. *Behrends*.

8. By a mixture of metaphors, which does not in the least obscure the sense, this healing is here said to sprout or germinate, a figure employed elsewhere to denote the sudden, rapid and spontaneous growth or rise of anything. In the last clause a third distinct figure is employed to express the same idea—viz., that of a march like the journey through the wilderness, with the pillar of cloud, as the symbol of God's presence, going before and after. A.

These blessings follow obedience. Those who will observe God's fast days and bring their life up to the spirit of them will have this reward. "Light breaking forth as the morning" is a strong and exquisitely beautiful figure for happiness after misery. The last half of the verse alludes to the symbols of God's presence in the wilderness, the pillar of cloud and of fire; God before and God behind their moving hosts. "Thy righteousness" going before may best be taken as thy righteous God, ever gracious to thee, will march before thee; corresponding to "the glory of God," the Shechinah, the symbol of His presence, going behind. The sentiment is, God shall be on every side of thee, thy never-failing, ever-present Guide and Protector. H. C.

There is a special and familiar presence of God with those who walk uprightly, both in the night of their sorrow and in the day of their joy. Yet we do not always in the same way

perceive that presence so as to enjoy it. God never leaves us, but we sometimes think He has done so. Yes, the glory of the Lord is above us and beneath us, on the right hand and on the left, without us and within us. We depart not from it, though it is behind us; we are going ever into the glorious light, for it is before us, too. The Lord shall be a wall of fire around about us, and the glory in the midst. *Spurgeon*.

9. This answer to prayer is in contrast with the praying spoken of in verse 4. H. C.

10. We must not only give alms according as the necessities of the poor require, but must give freely and cheerfully, and from a principle of charity; we must "draw out our soul to the hungry" (verse 10), not only draw out the money, and reach forth the hand, but do this from the heart, heartily, and without grudging; from a principle of compassion, and with a tender affection to such as we see to be in misery; let the heart go along with the gift, for God loves a cheerful giver, and so does a poor man too. When our Lord Jesus healed and fed the multitude, it was as having compassion on them. H.

11. There is in the last clause a climax. Not content with the image of a well-watered garden, he substitutes that of the stream, or rather of the spring itself. The general idea is a favorite with Isaiah. The exodus from Egypt had already made these images familiar and appropriate to any great deliverance.

12. The first clause agrees exactly with the work assigned to Israel in chaps. 42:14 and 57:11—viz., that of reclaiming the apostate nations, and building the wastes of a desolated world. A.—Thou shalt have the good things of earth; a restored community; the traces of desolation obliterated; prosperity smiling over the whole face of the land. H. C.

13. The mere outward observance was of no avail, unless the institution were regarded with reverence, as of God; nay more, with complacency, as in itself delightful. To call it a delight, is to acknowledge it as such. The second clause may be best explained by a paraphrase: "If thou wilt give to the Sabbath the name of a delight, and to the holy day or ordinance of Jehovah that of honorable." But mere acknowledgment is not enough—it must not only be admitted to deserve honor, but in fact receive it. Hence he adds, and if thou wilt honor it thyself, *by not doing*, literally, away from doing, so as not to do. Here again, to find one's *pleasure* on the Sabbath is more natural than to find one's *business*. Doing thy own ways, although not a usual combination,

is rendered intelligible by the constant use of *way* in Hebrew to denote a course of conduct. Speaking speech or talking talk is by some regarded as equivalent to speaking vanity in verse 9. A.

"The holy day of the Lord." God's own title of the Sabbath. His people are to account it a delight, and honorable; in contrast both to the weariness of a formal, heartless observance, and to open, careless profanation. The same message, which exalts moral duties in contrast to mere ceremonies, also exalts Sabbath-keeping as the crown of true morality. In the fifth commandment religion stoops into the sphere of social morality, and in the fourth, morality rises into the sphere of religious faith. *Birks.*

God claims the day as *His*, and as a holy day on that account. While all time is *His*, and while He requires all time to be profitably and usefully employed, He calls the Sabbath peculiarly *His* own—a day which is to be observed with reference to Himself and which is to be regarded as belonging to Him. To take the hours of that day, therefore, for *our* pleasure, or for business which is not a work necessary or merciful, is to rob God of that which He claims as *His* own. The idea is, here, that we are to do the things which God requires, and to consult *His* pleasure and *His* will in the observance. It is remarkable that the thing here adverted to is the very way in which the Sabbath is commonly violated. It is not extensively a day of business—for the propriety of a periodical cessation from toil is so obvious that men *will* have such days recurring at moderate intervals. *Barnes.*

Every one who permits his mind to dwell on secular affairs, and makes them his chief subjects of conversation on Sunday, is bringing in the cares and labors of the week to the exclusion of those higher thoughts and nobler aspirations that ought to fill the sacred hours. The ban was laid upon man's work, not as a privation, but that men might be free to turn their attention wholly to God's work; and this purpose of Sunday is frustrated if we occupy our time with worldly thoughts and words. To accomplish its Divine purpose, the sanctification of Sunday must be complete. Not the hands and feet only, but the mind and the tongue and all the powers, whether physical or mental, must be turned from the things of the world, and consecrated in an especial manner to God. *G. H. Hubbard.*

14. Everything must be done that puts an honor on the day and is expressive of our high thoughts of it; we must call it a "delight," not a

"task and a burden;" we must delight ourselves in it, in the restraints it lays upon us and the services it obliges us to: we must be in our element when we are worshipping God and in communion with Him. We must not only count it a delight, but call it so, must openly profess the complacency we take in the day, and the duties of it; we must call it so to God, in thanksgiving for it, and earnest desire of His grace to enable us to do the work of the day in its day, because we delight in it; we must call it so to others. If we thus "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," we shall have the comfort of it; the work will be its own wages. "If we call the Sabbath a delight, then shall we delight ourselves in the Lord;" He will more and more manifest Himself to us as the delightful Subject of our thoughts and meditations, and the delightful Object of our best affections. The more pleasure we take in serving God, the more pleasure we shall find in it. If we go about duty with cheerfulness, we shall go from it with satisfaction, and shall have reason to say, "It is good to be here, good to draw near to God." H.

The delight or pleasure which God's people have in Him is a direct and necessary consequence of the proper observance of the Sabbath. It is on that day, set apart by His own authority for His own service, that He chooses to meet with His people and to commune with them and bless them; and no one ever properly observed the Sabbath who did not find as a consequence that He had augmented pleasure in the existence, the character and the service of Jehovah. In no place in the Bible is there a more full account of the proper mode of keeping that holy day. We are to refrain from ordinary travelling and employments; we are not to engage in doing our own pleasure; we are to regard it with delight, and to esteem it a day worthy to be honored; and we are to show honor to it by not performing our own ordinary works or pursuing pleasure. This was the way in which the day was to be observed in the time of Isaiah, and in this way it may be and should be observed now. In this description there occurs nothing of peculiar Jewish ceremony, and nothing which indicates that it is not to be observed in this manner at all times. Under the Gospel, assuredly, it is as easy and as proper to celebrate the Sabbath in this way as it was in the times of Isaiah; and God doubtless intended that the Sabbath should be perpetually observed in this manner. . . . It is as true now as it was then that they who observe the Sabbath in a proper manner

find a pleasure and happiness in the Lord—in His existence, perfections, promises, law and in communion with Him—which is to be found nowhere else. Of this fact there are abundant witnesses now in every Christian Church, and they will continue to be multiplied in every coming age. And it is *as* true that the proper observance of the Sabbath contributes to the prosperity and safety of a nation now as it ever did among the Jewish people. It is not merely from the fact that God promises to protect and bless the people who keep His holy day—though this is of more value to a nation than all its armies and fleets and fortifications; but it is that there is in the institution itself much that tends to the welfare and prosperity of a country. It is the time when worldliness is broken in upon by a periodical season of rest, and when the thoughts are left free to contemplate higher and purer objects. It is a time when more instruction is imparted and received on moral and religious subjects than on all the other days of the week put together. The public worship of God tends to elevate the soul, to enlarge the intellect and to purify the heart. No institution has ever been originated that has contributed so much to elevate the common mind; to diffuse order, peace, neatness, decency, among men, and thus to perpetuate and extend all that is valuable in society, as the Sabbath. Any one may be convinced of this who will be at the pains to compare a neighborhood, a village or a city where the Sabbath is *not* observed with one where it is; and the difference in morals, honesty, intelligence, decency, order and comfort will convince him at once that society owes more to the Sabbath than to any single institution besides, and that in no way possible can one-seventh portion of the time be so well employed as in the manner contemplated by the Christian day of rest. *Barnes.*

The promise to those who obey is, that they should "have a place and a name in God's house better than of sons and daughters" (Isa. 66: 5). They should "ride upon the high places of the earth, and be fed with the heritage of Jacob." If the people of Israel would "*diligently hearken*" to obey in this particular, then there would ever be "kings and princes to sit upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the city shall remain forever." But if, on the other hand, they refuse to hearken, then the Lord Himself would "kindle a fire in the gates thereof, which shall devour the

palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched" (Jer. 17: 25, 27). Now, unless the nature of God has changed, or Israel has ceased to be a typical people, or the necessity for this law has passed, then His dealings with His ancient people, and the desolation which, in pursuance of His threatenings, He has visited upon them and their city, once "the joy of the whole earth," but now an astonishment and a proverb," must and will ever stand as a prophecy and pledge of His dealings toward every other nation and people upon the face of the earth. We have two remarkable instances of the fulfilment of promised blessings in connection with national fidelity. The first is the Chinese. That people are proverbial for their respect to parents and those in authority; and in them has been literally fulfilled the promise connected with the fifth commandment of living—"long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee;" for no nation can boast of a greater antiquity or longer existence. The other example is that of the British people, who have shown greater reverence for the sabbatic law than any other nation, and in whom has been fulfilled that other promise of outward prosperity and blessing in connection with the fourth commandment, of "riding upon the high places of the earth," and being "fed with the heritage of Jacob their father;" for her sails whiten every sea, and upon her vast dominions "the sun never sets." Unless revelation be a farce, and the entire Scriptures a forgery, the nation that honors its God in the observance of this law shall in turn be honored and blessed of Him; whereas the nation that dishonors Him by forsaking His law shall be lightly esteemed of Him, and shall only bring judgments upon themselves, and bind a similar, if not even greater curse upon their prosperity. *Stacy.*

The Sabbath is no circumscribed Jewish institution. It belongs to God's Church of all ages. It stands here imbedded in the picture of the Messianic Church, just as it stands imbedded in the Decalogue, which also was given, not to the Jewish Church, but to the universal Church of God. The details of the passage show that it is God's day ("My holy day"), in which man is to withdraw from his accustomed works, pleasures and ways to find his delight in holy thoughts, words and actions, a day ordained in the mercy and love of God to prevent man from being carnalized by his earthly occupations. The Sabbath is ever a vital element in true piety. As the Sabbath is neglected, religion loses its purity and power.

Disregard of the Sabbath is a sure sign of a low state of religious life. *Crosby.*

Even the Jewish Sabbath developed into a highly spiritual ordinance ; as witness Isaiah 58 ; it became more spiritual as the ages passed on and as revelation grew ; it included more and more of worship. What the Sabbath of Isaiah was to the Sabbath of the wilderness, the Sabbath of "the prophets" to the Sabbath of "the law"—*i.e.*, the Pentateuch, such is the Sabbath of Christianity to the best Sabbath of Judaism. Let the Sabbath law be expounded by the light of our Saviour's teachings and actions and pre-eminently of that Divine maxim, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath ;" let the true spirit and principle of the commandment be attained to and put into practice, and the Sabbath and the Lord's Day will be found to coincide. *J. H. Rigg.*

When the old land-bound Sabbath of Israel passed into the world-wide Lord's Day, it girdled the earth with universal brotherhood in the Lord. In whatever strange land, of whatever strange tongue, the believer now joins in that day's worshipping assembly, the sense of brotherhood glows within him. Over all the world, from the western skirts of the Pacific, around with the sun to its starting-point, that day, dotting the whole globe with gatherings in the name of our Lord, busied alike in prayer, and praise, and promise in His name, makes a testimony to the unity and brotherhood of Christian faith, which no man can gainsay. *Grey.*

THE VALUE OF THE SABBATH.

How is a wandering, fallen and depraved world to be recalled to God without that day which celebrates the works, and word, and grace of God—that day which recognizes His authority over man—that day which proclaims man's intellectual and accountable nature, his future, his eternal hopes ? The Sabbath interposes a space between total irreligion and the conscience of man ; it puts in the claims of God upon the human heart. Nor is the temporal welfare of mankind less concerned than their spiritual, in the observation of the Lord's Day. Man was created for six days' work, not for seven ; his faculties cannot bear an unremitted strain. Children, and servants, and the laboring classes of mankind (by far the more numerous and the most liable to be oppressed) require—what this institution gives—a day of repose, of refreshment, of religious recollection and peace. The whole world rests and is still,

that God may speak, that conscience may resume her sway, that the exhausted body and mind may recruit their powers, and be fitted for a more vigorous effort. The utmost productive labor of man is in the proportion of rest and exertion ordained by his merciful Creator. The best prevention of disease, the prolongation of human life itself, depends on the like alternation of toil and repose. The springs of pleasure are thus augmented and purified. The satiety, the sameness, the weariness, the uniformity of human life, is broken ; and a blessed, hallowed period for religion is interposed. The interval between these seasons is neither so distant as to be ineffectual to its end nor so near as to injure the real interests of our worldly callings ; but, like everything else in God's revelation, unites the prosperity of the soul with the highest welfare of the body and concerns of man. How great, then, is the importance of every one's falling in with the designs of this institution ! *Bp. Wilson.*

With every generation of our history the rush of activities becomes more absorbing and more strenuous, and the danger of ceasing to be men in becoming mere workers grows upon us. Societary circulation is swifter ; invention brings man closer to man, and multiplies the demands on our time and thought, while seeming only to increase our comforts. The outward look on life leaves us less time for the upward look on God. The "things seen and temporal" increase in number and interest, till we need an effort to get our gaze turned to the things unseen and eternal. So the need of the day of rest grows instead of diminishing, and experience forces men to see the uses of Sunday even for lower ends than these. We need it that man and beast may not be worn out by "the pace that kills." We need it that men may preserve their mental sanity and retain their fitness for the best work they are capable of. But, after all, we need it most to keep us in that living relation to God which is needed to keep us men. "The Sabbath was made for man"—for our humanity. It was made to lift us off the animal level, and bring out in us all that belongs to the superior nature. It was made to keep us in human liberty and to save us from a bestial bondage to toil. It was made to keep us in that likeness to God, which was the starting-point in our creation, and is the goal of our development. *R. E. Thompson.*

Rest is God's gift to us ; worship is our offering to God ; service is our ministry to man in the name of the Master. The day in which we

are refreshed by rest and uplifted by worship is the day when we go forth armed with rare and heavenly powers, to carry tidings of God's love to those who know Him not, or "to serve the hidden life of the brethren." The mighty Victor gains marvellous triumphs on the day of His rising power; but He gains them all through the faithful service of the loyal and bold-hearted. Accessions to the kingdom are tenfold—yes, a hundredfold—on these days of the Son of Man. Even the revelation of the good done and the souls saved on one Sabbath would no doubt astonish and overwhelm even the most sanguine Christian. An invisible army of "wage-workers" are reaping down untold harvests for God. "He that reapeth receiveth wages." Great spiritual forces attend upon every act of service done for God to our fellow-men. S. S. T.

There is not a message which the Sabbath brings, not a thought to which its proper use gives birth, not a feeling which it cherishes, but helps in the sanctification of the home life and in purifying the sources of domestic virtue. Without the Sabbath the family could hardly realize its unity in the fullest extent, and the roof-tree, ceasing to be love's sanctuary, would become but the lodging-house of individuals ignorant of the highest happiness. With the Sabbath the home stands or falls. For the defence of the fireside its sacred hours of worship and rest must be kept inviolate. *Anon.*

Effect on the individual Christian's life. The Christian man, desirous of loving God with all the affection of his heart, with all the rational intelligence of his mind, with all the devotion of his life, with all the energy of his strength, in the love taught him under the fourth law, will yield himself up gratefully and religiously to obey all duly ordered positive laws of the

Church of God. The Sunday and its sacred observance will be to him the centre, and furnish, so to speak, the form of his own way of life, and that of all his family and dependents. He will regard it every time it returns as God's holy day of rest, the weekly commemoration of the primeval rest of God and of all the signal mercies of the elder covenant. Knowing himself to be of the true Israel of God, he will not forget the blessings connected by God Himself with the sabbatical institution, vouchsafed to his fathers in the faith. He will celebrate it weekly as the feast of the Lord's resurrection, and all the blessings of that resurrection; as the feast of the Holy Ghost the Giver of peace and rest in the Church, as the weekly antepast of that glorious and unending rest in the presence of God which still remaineth for the people of God. It will be to him a day of rest, peace, prayer, praise and holy joy; no mournful and austere time, but, on the contrary, a thankful, happy time. He will remember his Lord's injunction not to forbid or refuse works of necessity or mercy on that day. He will gratefully shut up the records of the cares, the interests and the occupations of the week, and give that holy day to God; not discharging himself of his duties of worship by an attendance in God's house or holding himself at liberty to make his own convenience or inclination the rule of obedience; but faithfully, dutifully and completely sanctifying that day to rest, worship and the thought of God and heaven. And the other days, the train of Sunday, will borrow of its light; each having its own sacred, special commemoration belonging to it, and each reflecting some of the brightness of the Sunday just preceding and catching more and more from that which follows. *Bp. Moberly.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LIX.

59 : 1 BEHOLD, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save ; neither his ear
 2 heavy, that it cannot hear : but your iniquities have separated between you and your God,
 3 and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled
 with blood, and your fingers with iniquity ; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue mutter-
 4 eth wickedness. None sueth in righteousness, and none pleadeth in truth : they trust in
 5 vanity, and speak lies ; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. They hatch basi-
 lisks' eggs, and weave the spider's web : he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which
 6 is crushed breaketh out into a viper. Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall
 they cover themselves with their works : their works are works of iniquity, and the act of
 7 violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent
 blood : their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity ; desolation and destruction are in their paths.
 8 The way of peace they know not ; and there is no judgement in their goings : they have
 9 made them crooked paths ; whosoever goeth therein doth not know peace. Therefore is
 judgement far from us, neither doth righteousness overtake us : we look for light, but be-
 10 hold darkness ; for brightness, but we walk in obscurity. We grope for the wall like the
 blind, yea, we grope as they that have no eyes : we stumble at noonday as in the twilight ;
 11 among them that are lusty we are as dead men. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like
 doves : we look for judgement, but there is none ; for salvation, but it is far off from us.
 12 For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us : for our
 13 transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them : in transgressing and
 denying the LORD, and turning away from following our God, speaking oppression and
 14 revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgement is turned
 away backward, and righteousness standeth afar off : for truth is fallen in the street, and
 15 uprightness cannot enter. Yea, truth is lacking ; and he that departeth from evil maketh
 himself a prey : and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgement.
 16 And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor : therefore
 17 his own arm brought salvation unto him ; and his righteousness, it upheld him. And he
 put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head ; and he put
 18 on garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke. According to
 their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies ; to
 19 the islands he will repay recompence. So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the
 west, and his glory from the rising of the sun : for he shall come as a rushing stream, which
 20 the breath of the LORD driveth. And a redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that
 21 turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. And as for me, this is my covenant with
 them, saith the LORD : my spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy
 mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the
 mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

Chap. 59. This chapter is closely connect-
 ed in sense with the preceding, and is designed
 to illustrate the same general sentiment—that
 the reason why the religious services of the na-
 tion were not accepted, their prayers answered
 and the nation delivered from calamity, was
 their hypocrisy and their other sins. The pre-
 vious chapter contained a bold and energetic
 reproof of their false and hollow services, and
 of their expectation of the Divine favor when
 they were observing only external rites with-
 out repentance, and even when they continued
 to practise oppression and cruelty. This beau-

tiful chapter states more in detail their sins and
 the consequences of their transgressions. The
 following analysis of the chapter will show its
 design and scope at a single view.

1. It was not because Jehovah was unable to
 save them that they were exposed to such
 judgments and visited with such calamities
 (verse 4). They were, therefore, not to blame
 Him. This general principle is stated in order
 to prevent what commonly occurs when men
 suffer much—a disposition to throw the blame
 on God.

2. It was for their sins that they were ex-

posed to these judgments (verses 2-8). The prophet proceeds to specify those sins in detail, with a view to bring them to conviction and to repentance. In this statement he goes over the leading offences of the nation, specifying them particularly, and showing that they deserved all that they had suffered.

3. After this statement of the prevalent sins of the nation, the prophet introduces the people as making *confession* that it was for these and similar sins that they were exposed to the Divine displeasure. Identifying Himself with the people, He enumerates the calamities to which they were exposed as a consequence of the sins which prevailed (verses 9-14). They were in darkness, they waited in vain for light; they stumbled at noonday; they vented their sorrows like the roaring of bears or the plaintive cry of the dove, but all in vain. They felt that their transgressions were multiplied and that they deserved the Divine displeasure, and therefore they were subjected to these severe calamities.

4. Jehovah is represented as seeing this state of deep guilt—a state where there was deep conviction of that guilt and a readiness to make confession—and as wondering that there was no intercessor, and as *Himself* interposing to bring deliverance and salvation (verses 15-18). It was the earnest wish of Jehovah that there should be deliverance, and in order to effect that He Himself procured it. The *characteristics* of Him who should come to accomplish these purposes were righteousness, salvation, vengeance and zeal (verse 17). He would come to take recompense on His foes and to reward the wicked according to their deeds (verse 18).

5. The *effect* of this would be that the name of Jehovah would be feared from the rising to the setting sun. Jehovah would erect a barrier against the enemy when He should come in like a flood; and the Redeemer should come to Zion to effect deliverance for those who should truly repent (verses 19, 20).

6. A covenant would be established between God and those who would turn away from transgressions (verse 21). The *nature* of that covenant was, that its blessings would be perpetual. The spirit which God would give and the words which He would put into their mouths would abide with them and their posterity forever.

"As this chapter," says Lowth, "is remarkable for the beauty, strength and variety of the images with which it abounds, so it is peculiarly distinguished by the eloquence of the

composition and the exact construction of the sentences. From the first verse to the two last it falls regularly into stanzas of four lines." The chapter has evidently a primary reference to the character of the nation in the times of Isaiah. But the chapter evidently also looks forward to future times; and the close of it is so manifestly applicable to the times of the Messiah that it is impossible not to apply it to Him. *Barnes*.

The general apostasy of the covenant people developing itself in extreme immorality, at length arouses the long-slumbering jealousy and justice of their God. He awakes to retrieve His honor and sustain His cause by extraordinary effusions of His Spirit, reclaiming some of His ancient people; gathering to Himself and to them the Gentile nations and making His word and His Spirit permanently effective for the interests of truth and salvation. The Jews perish, not because the Lord's arm lacks power to save or His ear the quick perception of the cry of prayer, but because their sins have virtually sundered their relations to Him as His people, and have forbidden Him to hear or save them in their distress. With a striking variety in his style, the prophet describes the sins of the people, first in direct address to them (verses 2, 3); then by speaking of them (verses 4-8); and finally He classes Himself with them as a common sufferer in the general calamity (verses 9-13).

The prophet cannot speak of the great facts of the Gospel age—*e.g.*, the Messiah's coming, the effusions of the Spirit and the calling of the Gentiles, without occasionally taking notice of the ancient covenant people to show why they were in the main excluded from participation in those magnificent changes and unparalleled blessings. In this chapter the notice of the covenant people gives prominence to their extreme and incorrigible degeneracy, in view of which the Lord, as one despairing of any help for His cause from them, rallies His energies for a new effort, relieves Himself by visiting them with deserved retribution, and puts new life into His kingdom by the effusions of His Spirit to purify the converted remnant of the Jews and to impress the fear of His name and the power of His truth upon the Gentiles. H. C.

They have fallen so low that no one seems disposed to attempt a reformation, or to think of recovery as possible. The worst feature of their condition is, that they do not appear to know to what a depth they are sunk in degradation. Jehovah Himself, by a strong figure

of speech, is represented as wondering that no one attempts relief or intercession. Yet, because of this, His compassion is the more deeply stirred; and though their sins would justify Him in leaving them to destruction, He will provide a Redeemer and renew His covenant of salvation. It may be needful first to show His displeasure at sin by the judgments of His hand; and these, like an overwhelming flood, or a river swept along by a mighty wind, shall cause the nations from east to west to fear the name of the Lord. Thus was it before the coming of Christ. The wants and woes, the struggles and strifes of humanity had created a yearning for a Deliverer, had prepared the way for the Redeemer promised to Zion. The grace of God triumphs over the sins of men and turns deserved judgments into agencies of moral reformation. The very helplessness to which mankind had reduced themselves by sin was the plea for the humiliation and sacrifice of the Son of God for their recovery. J. P. T.

1. The prophet merely pauses for a moment to exonerate His master from all blame before continuing his accusation of the people. He solemnly affirms that the rejection of God's ancient people was the fruit of their own sin, and not to be imputed either to unfaithfulness on His part or to want of strength or wisdom to protect them. A.

2. That God did not save His ancient people at the time referred to was due to no such cause, but only to their sins, which interposed a vast moral distance between Himself and them and practically turned His face away so that He could not hear. H. C.—Their sins had *caused* Jehovah to hide or turn away His face from their prayers from an unwillingness to hear them when they were so deeply immersed in sin. Thus the LXX: "On account of your sins He has turned away His face from you so that He will not have mercy." It is universally true that indulgence in sin causes God to turn away His face and to withhold mercy and compassion. He cannot pardon those who indulge in transgression and who are unwilling to abandon the ways of sin. *Barnes.*

If our prayers be not answered and the salvation we wait for be not wrought for us, it is not because God is weary of hearing prayer, but because we are weary of praying; not because His ear is heavy when we speak to Him, but because our ears are heavy when He speaks to us. Sin hides His face from us (which denotes great displeasure), it provokes Him in anger to withdraw His gracious presence, to suspend the tokens of His favor and the in-

stances of His help; He hides His face, as refusing to be seen or spoken with. H.

The two statements that forgiveness is the communication of the love of God unhindered by man's sin, and that forgiveness is the removal of the punishment of sin, are really but two ways of saying the same thing. If we rightly understand what is the death of death, what is the consequence of transgression, how it comes and in what sense it is that every man, by every sinful act, carries a coal to the hell-fire that may have to consume him—if we understand that the real misery and punishment is what the old prophet proclaimed it to be—"Your sins have *separated* between you and your God," then we shall understand how the two representations coincide and flow together and how the real penalty passes away where the love is welcomed and received. A. M.

3. The general charge of great sin must now be substantiated. For the greater force, the prophet represents every physical organ of their body—hands, fingers, lips and tongue—as actively engaged in sinning, as if to show that every power of their being was pressed to its utmost capacity of wrong-doing. H. C.

4-8. The wider meaning of the whole description is evident from Paul's combining parts of it with phrases drawn from several Psalms remarkably resembling it, in proof of the depravity of human nature (Rom. 3: 15-17).

7. The first clause expresses not a mere disposition, but an eager proclivity to wrong. The word translated *thoughts* has here and elsewhere the specific sense of purposes, contrivances, devices. *Their paths* are the paths in which their feet run to evil and make haste to shed innocent blood. The two nouns combined in the last clause strictly denote desolation and crushing—*i.e.*, utter ruin. A.

9-13. In the passage beginning here, embracing at least verses 9-13, the prophet classes himself with the sinning people, either from his sympathy with them under these great public calamities or as one actually suffering under them in common with the whole people. The former is the more probable supposition. This use of the first person plural therefore avails nothing toward proving that the writer was not the original Isaiah, but was some second or pseudo-Isaiah who lived near the close of the exile at Babylon. For (1) there is nothing in the passage to prove, but much to disprove the theory that this chapter was written near the close of the exile, and describes the state of morals at that time; and (2) it is entirely legitimate for a prophet whose heart

sympathizes warmly with the fortunes of his people to conceive and speak of himself as suffering with them, though the time be far remote. Cases under this law abound in the prophecies. (See Isa. 15 : 5 ; 16 : 11 and 21 : 2, 4, 10.) Besides, the use of the third person, "they," in verses 4-8 in this same connection will just as much prove that the writer was *not* living then and there, as the use of the first person in verses 9-13 proves that he was. H. C.

8, 10. That is a deceptive notion which attributes the want of unction in prayer to an arbitrary, or even inexplicable, withdrawal of God from the soul. Aside from the operation of physical causes, where is the warrant, in reason or revelation, for ascribing joylessness in prayer to *any* other cause than some wrong in the soul itself ? What says an old prophet ? "Behold, the Lord's ear is *not* heavy that it cannot hear. But your *iniquities* have separated between you and your God. Your *sins* have hid His face from you. *Therefore*, we wait for light, but behold obscurity ; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind ; we grope as if we had no eyes ; we stumble at noonday as in the night ; we are in desolate places, as dead men." Could words describe more truthfully or explain more philosophically that phenomenon of religious experience which we call the "hiding of God's countenance ?" *Phelps.*

13. The original of verse 13 is a model of compact and forcible description which can scarcely be transferred to our language. This approximates to it, They are sinning and lying against the Lord and turning away from after our God ; speaking of oppression and revolt. H. C.

14. The verse contains a further confession of the evil of their course of life, and among other things they acknowledged that they had been *unjust* and oppressive in their legal decisions. They had been influenced by partiality and by bribes ; they had condemned the innocent, they had acquitted the guilty. Judgment had thus been *turned back* by their sins when it seemed to be approaching and entering the city. *And justice standeth afar off.* This is a beautiful figure. Justice is represented as standing at a distance from the city. Deterred by their sins, it would not enter. They prevented its approach, and it was unknown among them. *For truth is fallen in the street.* Or rather perhaps *in the gate*—the place of concourse and the place where justice was administered. *Barnes.*

14, 15. The passage affirms that truth and justice were utterly prostrate in the courts. Verse 15 thus : "And so truth is missing (not to be found), and whoever abstains from wrongdoing subjects himself to violence and spoil"—a state of society in which might makes right and the innocent and non-resistant become the prey and plunder of ruffians. Of course the Lord saw this, and it was grievous in His eyes that there was no justice there. The picture delineates with historic fidelity the religious and mostly the moral state of the scribes and Pharisees, the leading civil and religious influences among the Jews, shortly before their destruction by the Romans. This degeneracy had been in progress for several generations, and during the life of Christ on earth was far advanced toward the condition described here. It was ancient Judaism, effete, palsied of its moral power, perverted to the extreme of formality and self-righteousness, and therefore solemnly abandoned of God, and given up to be superseded by the Gospel system. This is the point of transition described in the passage now before us. H. C.

The passage before us had a primary reference to the Jews and to the prevalence of iniquity in the Jewish nation which rendered the Divine interposition proper. But it is language also that will quite as appropriately describe the moral condition of the world as laying the foundation for the necessity of the Divine interposition by the Messiah. Indeed the following verses undoubtedly refer to Him. No one, it is believed, can attentively read the passage and doubt this. The mind of the prophet is fixed upon the depravity of the Jewish nation. Everywhere iniquity prevailed. The hands, the tongue, the eyes, the feet, the fingers, were all polluted. The whole nation was sunk in moral corruption ; and this was but a partial description of what was occurring everywhere on the earth. In such a state of things in the Jewish nation and in the whole world the question could not but arise whether no deliverer could be found ? Was this state of things to continue forever ? Was there no way of pardon—no way by which deserved and impending wrath could be diverted ? From this melancholy view, therefore, the prophet turns to Him who was to be the great Deliverer, and the remainder of the chapter is occupied with a most beautiful description of the Redeemer and of the effect of His coming. The sentiment of the whole passage is, that the deep and extended depravity of man was the foundation of the necessity of the Divine inter-

position in securing salvation, and that in view of the guilt of men God provided one who was a glorious deliverer, and who was to come to Zion as the Redeemer. *Barnes*.

16. What was wanting was not merely a qualified man, but any man whatever, to maintain the cause of Israel and Jehovah. A like absolute expression is employed in 2 K. 14 : 26, where it is said that Jehovah saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter and that there was *no helper for Israel*, not merely no sufficient one, but none at all. The desperate nature of the case is then described in terms still stronger, and only applicable to Jehovah by the boldest figure. *A*.

16, 17. "Man" in the sense of a whole man, a hero, and "intercessor" in the sense of one who intervenes for help are equivalent expressions, meaning that God saw no helper and no help for this state of things, and therefore aroused Himself to the needful work. "His own arm saved" (*i.e.*, His cause and people) "for Himself." His sense of right and love of justice sustained His energy and fired His soul for vigorous action. Verse 17 should begin, "And so, or consequently, He put on righteousness," etc., girding Himself with His armor as a hero for the battle. The sentiment is that His regard for His earthly kingdom and people, His love of justice and righteousness, arouse His soul to special retribution. He will therefore bring vengeance upon His enemies and deliverance to His friends. It is supposable that the first two clauses which name righteousness and salvation refer to His deliverance of His friends, and the other two to vengeance on His enemies. *H. C.*

The whole figure here is that drawn from a warrior or a conqueror; a hero prepared alike for defence and for offence. The idea is, that He would be able to defend and vindicate His people, and to carry an aggressive warfare against His enemies. But it was not to be a warfare literally of blood and carnage. It was to be such as would be accomplished by righteousness, and zeal, and a desire to secure salvation. The triumph of righteousness was the great object still; the conquests of the Redeemer were to be those of truth. *Barnes*.

Because they have no strength of their own nor any active men that will set to it in good earnest to redress the grievances either of their iniquities or of their calamities, therefore "His own arm shall bring salvation to Him," to His people, or to Him whom He would raise up to be the Deliverer, Christ, the Power of God and Arm of the Lord, that Man of His right hand,

whom He made strong for Himself. *H.*—The Divine man commenced and finished the mightiest work of the universe alone. He was aided by no human arm. Not even a single, whole-hearted encouragement cheered him along His path. He suffered and died for a world of sinners in profound solitude. A being thus situated and thus acting has a soul to pity where no pity is wanted and a compassion to exercise toward the most abandoned of men that awakens no thankfulness or praise. Sympathy reaches a height of grandeur, when forgotten and unappreciated it toils and travails for the eternal good of a world. *Reid*.

All barriers were broken down in Him, the atoning sacrifice, the mediating Lord—all barriers between man and man, between man and God, between earth and heaven. No barriers of race could destroy the unity of the humanity He had deigned to take, not as a mutable vesture, but as another nature; no barriers of past sin could divide the most guilty who believed in Him from God and from purity; no impenetrable, brazen gates of Hades could separate, really, the dead and the living, since the seen and the unseen were alike His kingdom. Where any wall of partition had stood He stood, and said, "I am the Door." Where the gates of exclusion stood, He stands, with the compassionate countenance to welcome and the irresistible, pierced hands to bless and to unite. *Anon*.

18. The only satisfactory solution is the one afforded by the hypothesis that the salvation here intended is salvation in the highest sense from sin and all its consequences, and that by Israel and the isles (or Gentiles) we are to understand the Church or people of God and the world considered as its enemies and His.

19. *And they shall fear from the west the name of Jehovah, and from the rising of the sun His glory; for it shall come like a straitened stream, the spirit of Jehovah raising a banner in it.* The name and glory of Jehovah are here not only parallels, but synonyms, as we learn from other places where the two terms are jointly or severally used to signify the manifested excellence or glorious presence of Jehovah. (See above, chaps. 30 : 27 ; 35 : 2 ; 40 : 5 ; 42 : 11.) On the whole, the meaning of the verse appears to be, that the ends of the earth shall see and fear the name and glory of Jehovah; because when He approaches as their enemy, it will be like an overflowing stream (chaps. 8 : 7, 8 ; 28 : 15), in which His spirit bears aloft the banner or the signal of victory. *A.*—They shall see His hand in judgment on His enemies and in salvation to His people.

They of the west and they of the east will alike behold these demonstrations of God. All people of the remotest lands are embraced under these two of the cardinal quarters of the globe. The Spirit and the word of the living God will constitute the moving forces which are to subdue the nations to the love and the fear of His name.

20. The salvation of those from Jacob who could be brought (by wise means) to accept of Christ was first in the order of time in the Gospel work, an object dear to the Messiah's heart. The Christian reader will notice with interest that Paul (Rom. 11 : 26) associates this prophecy with a glorious era when "the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in" (*i.e.*, to the Gospel communion), and "So, all Israel shall be saved." H. C.

21. Israel is here, as in many other parts of this great prophecy, regarded not merely as a receiver, but as a dispenser of the truth, an office with which, as we have seen, the body is invested in connection with the head and in perpetual subordination to Him. Israel, as well as the Messiah, and in due dependence on Him, was to be the light of the Gentiles, the reclamer of apostate nations; and in this high mission and vocation was to be sustained and prospered by the never-failing presence of the Holy Spirit, as the author and the finisher of all revelation. (See above, chaps. 42 : 1-7; 44 : 3; 49 : 1-9; 51 : 16; 54 : 3; 56 : 6-8; 58 : 12. And compare Jer. 31 : 31; Joel 2 : 28; Ezek. 36 : 27; 39 : 29.) A.

The Spirit of God shall come to us, to be our sanctifier. In the Redeemer there was a new covenant made with us, a covenant of promises; and this is the great and comprehensive promise of that covenant, that God will give and continue His word and Spirit to His Church and people throughout all generations. The Spirit that was upon Christ shall always continue in the hearts of the faithful; there shall be some in every age on whom He shall work and in whom He shall dwell, and thus the "Comforter shall abide with the Church for-

ever" (John 14 : 16). The word of Christ shall always continue in the mouths of the faithful; there shall be some in every age who, "believing with the heart unto righteousness, shall with the tongue make confession unto salvation." The word shall never depart out of the mouth of the Church, for there shall still be a seed to speak Christ's holy language and profess His holy religion. The Spirit and the word go together, and by them the Church is kept up. For the word in the mouths of our ministers, nay, the word in our own mouths, will not profit us unless the Spirit work with the word, and give us an understanding. But the Spirit does His work by the word and in concurrence with it; and whatever is pretended to be a dictate of the Spirit must be tried by the Scriptures. On these foundations the Church is built, stands firm and shall stand forever, Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. H.

My words shall not depart out of the mouth of thy seed nor of thy seed's seed. It is the great law by which religion and virtue are spread and perpetuated in the world that God is faithful to this covenant, and that He blesses the efforts of His friends in endeavoring to train up generations for His service. Christian parents should repose on this promise of a faithful God. They may and should believe that it is His design to perpetuate religion in the families of those who truly serve and obey Him. They should be faithful in imparting religious truth; faithful in prayer; faithful in a meek, holy, pure and benevolent example; they should so live *that their children may safely tread in their footsteps*; they should look to God for His blessing on their efforts, and their efforts will not be in vain. They shall see their children walk in the ways of virtue; and when they die, they may leave the world with unwavering confidence that God will not suffer His faithfulness to fail; that He will not break His covenant nor alter the thing that is gone out of His lips.

Barnes.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LX.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF MESSIAH'S KINGDOM.

60 : 1 ARISE, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples : but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see : they all gather themselves together, they come to thee : thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be carried in the arms. Then thou shalt see and be lightened, and thine heart shall tremble and be enlarged ; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned unto thee, the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah ; they all shall come from Sheba : they shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praises of the LORD. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee : they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows ? Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, for the name of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. And strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee : for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. Thy gates also shall be open continually ; they shall not be shut day nor night ; that men may bring unto thee the wealth of the nations, and their kings led *with them*. For that nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish ; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine, and the box tree together ; to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious. And the sons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee ; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet ; and they shall call thee The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man passed through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the nations, and shalt suck the breast of kings : and thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy saviour, and thy redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron : I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteous. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, desolation nor destruction within thy borders ; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee : but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself : for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever ; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. The little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation : I the LORD will hasten it in its time.

Chap. 60. In this chapter there is commenced a most glowing and beautiful description of the "golden age" under the Messiah. The description is continued to the close of chap. 62. The future glory of the Church is displayed under the most splendid colors and with every variety of imagery. It is designed to set forth the glory of that time when the

Gentiles shall be gathered into the Church, and when the whole world shall become tributary to the Messiah and be illuminated with the light of Christian truth. The main design of the chapter is to foretell the conversion of the Gentiles or the heathen world and the happy and peaceful times which shall exist when that has occurred. In doing this, the powers of the

inspired prophet seem to have been taxed to the utmost to convey a just view of the glory of the scene. That it refers to the time of the Messiah no one can doubt who reads it. In accordance with the usual mode in Isaiah, the prophet throws himself into the midst of the future scene (verse 1), and the events are described as passing in vision before his eyes. He sees the light as already shining; the glory of Jehovah as actually arisen upon the Church; he sees the Gentiles flocking to the Redeemer and pressing into the Church as clouds, and he sees them bringing their most valued and precious objects and laying them at the feet of the Messiah. The whole world is made tributary to the Church; and the whole world smiles in peace and glory under the influence of the Gospel of peace. *Barnes.*

This magnificent hymn of triumph, following close upon the lamentation of the prophet over the rejection of Israel, is like the accelerated movement of a symphony after the plaintive measure of the *andante*, when, as in the rapids above Niagara, all the waves of sound leap and rush together, crested with spray, flashing with light, glittering with rainbows, as they whirl toward the tumultuous, deafening plunge of the *finale*. Yet as, through all the modulations of the symphony, the theme is ever the same; so through the varying keys of this grand, prophetic poem runs the theme of redemption by Christ, from the burst of wonder over the child Immanuel, through the humiliation of the Man of sorrows, the anguish of the crucified Saviour, on to His triumph and glory in His Church. To that glory the prophet summons the true Israel—the spiritual Zion, the Church of living souls. The presence of Christ is her illumination and joy; and, through the brightness of her shining, the nations are gathered to her seat, until her heart throbs and swells with wonder and exultation. J. P. T.

The previous chapter has fully opened the way so that the next scene in the prophetic panorama will legitimately be, *The duties and the glories of the Gospel age*. The powers of sin have seemed to reach their maximum; Satan has done his worst; he has fearfully poisoned and paralyzed (morally) even the covenant people of God; but by so doing he has called out the justice and judgment of the Almighty and aroused the Omnipotent arm to retrieve the cause of truth and righteousness. The Church's extremity is God's opportunity; the conflict deepens; God's word and Spirit are to be matched against the whole array of the powers of darkness, and the prophetic eye is

thrown afar down the vista of time to sweep the field of battle and tell the ultimate result. Beyond all question, this is the starting point from which this chapter begins. The Redeemer has come to Zion (chap. 59:20); her own Messiah appears; Judaism, long since decayed and waxed old, retires, to give place to a new form of religious organization and to new modes of Christian life. The Spirit and the word (59:21)—agencies simple, yet through the power of God, most mighty—are now commissioned for the field. The last thought of the previous chapter is that these agencies—the working forces of the Almighty—are to have this field to the end of time—that is to say, till the victories of the Messiah are complete and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, or in the phrase of Isaiah, till men “shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (11:9). Now therefore with most beautiful fitness the Lord through the prophet calls upon His people, His spiritual Zion, to “arise and shine” in the light of Gospel truth already breaking forth as the very face of God upon her (verses 1, 2); for Gentiles are coming to walk in this light and to be blessed therein (verse 3); let her lift up her eyes and behold their thronging hosts, her own new-born sons and daughters (verse 4). Her heart throbs under almost overpowering emotions (verse 5); Gentile converts come with their wealth and their full hearts from Arabia on the south (verses 6, 7), and from the isles of the west (verses 8–10); by these forces of treasure and of willing hands, her walls arise (verse 10); her gates stand open continually for new accessions (verse 11), and no nation can safely withhold its contributions (verse 12); the glories of Lebanon adorn her city (verse 13); her enemies humbly acknowledge her the chosen of God (verse 14); Zion, honored and enriched by the nations, becomes surpassingly glorious (verses 15, 16); old things give place to things new and brighter (verse 17); violence and wrong are felt and feared no more (verse 18); God Himself becomes her abiding light and glory (verses 19, 20); her people all righteous and God glorifying Himself in them, crown the magnificent panorama of this wonderful vision of Gospel victories and triumphs. This unparalleled description needs no aid of commentator to make its general significance clear, its beauties apparent, its sublimity and grandeur most thoroughly thrilling and inspiring. If the reader will carefully consider and

apply the scope of the context so as to see in this chapter an outline of the ultimate results of Gospel truth made mighty in human souls by the Spirit of God ; and if, furthermore, he will bear in mind that the seer whose prophetic vision swept this august field and grasped these ultimate results *was a Jew*, of Hebrew thought, imagination and surroundings ; who must therefore, by a simple law of necessity, think of and see the future Zion only as the Zion of his own time remade, extended, readorned and still the rallying centre for the nations of the earth, proselyted to her altar and to her Temple shrines, the significance of the whole will be readily seen. As to the time of fulfilment, none can say more than that it began with the Christian age, and will be complete when and only when the Gospel shall have had free course in all lands, and the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God. When the state of the world comes up to this description, *men will know it*, and can say with no faltering of doubt, "There hath failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord hath spoken unto the house of Israel ; all is come to pass" (Josh. 21 : 45). Till then there will be work for the toiling hand ; prayer for the waiting but trustful heart ; and the inspirations of hope, as when Christians work toward an end which they know lies fixed irreversibly in the purposes of the Holy One of Israel, awaiting fulfilment in its time. H. C.

1. Other benefits may be magnified above their just proportions ; but no words can come up to the real dignity of these ; and therefore the most magnificent descriptions, borrowed from objects familiar to our senses, do not adorn or exalt, but only speak of them in the most respectful manner that our capacities admit. *Stanhope*.—Light is the usual emblem of happiness and darkness of affliction ; Jerusalem is bid to arise and give light to all about her, to communicate to others part of the honor and lustre which she had received from God, the true "Sun of Righteousness" (Mal. 4 : 2). *W. Louth*.

2. The perfection of the glory promised to the Church is not to arise from its contrast with the darkness of the world around it, but from the diffusion of its light until that darkness disappears. The prophet here reverts for a moment to the previous condition of the world, in order to describe with more effect the glorious change to be produced. He is not therefore to be understood as saying that Zion shall be glorious because while the nations are in darkness she is to enjoy exclusive light, but

because the light imparted to her first shall draw the nations to her.

4. In this, as in the parallel passages, there is, by a strange coincidence, no word or phrase implying restoration or return, but the image evidently is that of enlargement and accession ; the children thus brought to Zion being not those whom she had lost, but such as she had never before known, as is evident from chap. 49 : 21.

5. All agree that it describes a great and joyful change to be produced by the accession of the Gentiles to the Church or chosen people, and the effect of this enlargement on the latter. The most natural interpretation of the verse is that which makes it a promise of indefinite enlargement, comprehending both the persons and the riches of the nations. To the assumption that commercial intercourse and navigation are here represented under forms and names derived from the Old Testament history, I am so far from objecting, that I wish to apply it to the whole prediction, and to use precisely the same liberty in understanding what is said of Zion and her sons, as in understanding what is said of Tarshish and her ships. Here, as in so many former instances, the writer does not even accidentally use any term explicitly denoting restoration or return, but only such as are appropriate to mere accession and increase *ab extra*. A.

The reformation was heralded and helped by a wonderful succession of inventions and discoveries, which have changed the whole face of the world and the whole order of society. Printing, gunpowder, the mariner's compass, the doubling of the Cape of Good Hope and the discovery of America would, in any case, have made revolutions, electrifying the Church into a new career ; but impressed as they were at once into the service of Protestantism, they became doubly rousing and revolutionary. Commerce and the mechanic arts, though not begotten of Protestantism, were soon adopted by it, baptized at its altars, and made to fight its battles for the dominion of the world. We have only to take the world as we find it, busy, rich, rampant as it is, and subdue it, as we subdue ourselves, to Christ. We may be assured that the baptism of a better consecration is in store for us, when, on every sea, the keels of a Christian commerce shall go and come, and every land shall ring with Christian toil, and every fortune that is piled by Christian hands shall rise as a Christian temple, and every form of fraud, injustice and oppression shall melt like icebergs drifting in a summer sea. R. D. H.

6. *The praises of Jehovah as good news.* This form of expression is adopted in order to convey the full force of the Hebrew verb, which does not mean simply to announce or even to announce with joy, but to announce glad tidings. Retaining this sense here, the word would seem to signify not the direct praise of God, but the announcement of the fact that others praised Him, and the messengers would be described as bringing to Jerusalem the news of the conversion of their people. They are here, according to Isaiah's practice, represented by a group of ancestral names. Ephah was the eldest son of Midian (Gen. 25 : 4), who was himself the son of Abraham by Keturah (Gen. 25 : 2) and the brother of Jokshan, the father of Sheba (Gen. 25 : 1-4). The first two represent Northern and Central Arabia, the third Arabia Felix.

7. To the traders of Arabia, with their caravans and precious wares, he now adds her shepherds, with their countless flocks. Ezekiel also speaks of Tyre as trading with *Arabia and all the chiefs of Kedar in lambs and rams and goats* (Ezek. 27 : 21). These are here described as gathered in one vast flock to Jerusalem, or rather *for her*—i.e., for her use or service, which agrees best with what follows, and with the usage of the Hebrew preposition. They are then, by a bold and striking figure, represented as offering themselves, which is first expressed by the general term *serve* or *minister*, and then more unequivocally by declaring that they shall themselves ascend the altar. A.

The whole description throughout this chapter is figurative. Isaiah in vision sees far in the future the glorious diffusion of the Gospel among the nations of the earth and its wonderful fruits in the complete and unreserved consecration of wealth and of soul to the service and worship of God. But to give the idea of worshipping God, the forms must be Jewish, and Gentiles must come up for worship to the Temple at Jerusalem. Hence also the nations named are not those which are now most prominent in the heathen world, but are precisely those which were prominent then. Arabia on the south and east and the islands on the great west (verse 9) would be first and most naturally thought of by a Jew of Isaiah's time as needing conversion. On the same principle of interpretation, we cannot assume that the Temple at Jerusalem will be the great central object in this glorious Gospel age. We cannot take in its literal sense what is said here of the flocks of Kedar and of the rams of Nebaioth, coming up with acceptance upon God's altar. For

Temple and altar have alike gone down and passed away, as to their literal form, and nothing remains of them save their spiritual significance as indicating the pure, earnest, self-sacrificing worship and service of God. H. C.

8. **Fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows.** It is a fine conception of Vitranga, that the ships expressly mentioned in the next verse are here described in their first appearance at a distance resembling with their outspread sails and rapid course a fleecy cloud driven by the wind, and a flight of doves returning to their young. Both comparisons are elsewhere used as here to indicate rapidity of motion. A.

Morier, in his "Second Journey," p. 140, has well illustrated this passage. "In the environs of the city" (Ispahan), says he, "to the westward, near Zainderood, are many pigeon houses, erected at a distance from habitations. They are large, round towers, rather broader at the bottom than the top, crowned by conical spiracles, through which the pigeons descend. Their interior resembles a honey-comb, pierced with a thousand holes, each of which forms a snug retreat for a nest. The extraordinary flights of pigeons which I have seen upon one of these buildings, afford perhaps a good illustration of Isa. 60 : 8. Their great numbers and the compactness of their mass literally looked like a cloud at a distance and obscured the sun in their passage." This has already in part at least been fulfilled. The rapid conversions in the time of the apostles, the accessions to the Church from the Gentiles, accorded with this prediction. In numerous revivals of religion also has there been a fulfilment of it ; and we are yet to anticipate a far more striking and glorious completion of it in the conversion of the heathen world to the Christian faith. *Barnes.*

I have seen in Egypt dovecots rising, gallery upon gallery, so that thousands of pigeons could flock together to their shelter ; and when, at evening, they came flying to their windows, the air was thick as with a cloud. Even so, while neighboring countries shall yield their tributes of flocks and merchandise, the fleets of the ocean, dense as clouds, swift as doves, shall come freighted with treasures from distant lands. And so spontaneous and universal shall be the homage of the nations to Zion, that the abundance shall require no precautions for its safety. Her gates shall stand wide open the livelong night ; her very enemies shall serve her ; her old oppressors shall bow at her feet. Such a consummation may well find utterance in such a song. J. P. T.

9. A virtual though not a formal answer to the question in the one before it. As if He had said, Wonder not that these are seen approaching, for the whole world is only awaiting My command to bring thy sons, etc. A.

In this great work of winning the world, commerce, it seems, is to take a conspicuous part. While "the isles" wait for Christ, "the ships of Tarshish" are to be "first" in bringing the sons of Zion from far, with their silver and their gold as an offering unto "the name of the Lord their God," and as consecrated means in the hands of Him who hath steadfastly purposed to "glorify the house of His glory." Among all the means used in converting the human race to Christ, commerce, no doubt, is to be one of the most important. Three fifths of the earth's surface are covered with waters, while the remaining fifths lie in the shape of two vast continents, and of innumerable isles—the abodes of men, and the depositories of those treasures which God has given for the use of men. Between these the great deep is a broad highway, and commerce, with her ships, the only system of intercommunication. Without commerce, neither science nor art, neither civilization nor religion, could spread beyond the boundaries of the land of their birth. All other agencies, not purely spiritual, are, when left to themselves, local. Commerce has the only created arm that can reach round the globe. This, then, is the grand agent which God has prepared for Himself, and which He purposes to use in the work of gathering in the nations to Christ, and in collecting the gold and silver, the redundant means, which that work demands. *J. S. Stone.*

11. So great is the pressure upon her of these throngs of returning converts, that her gates must needs stand open day and night. The last clause assigns the reason—to bring in unto thee the masses of the Gentiles, their kings also being led in. The word translated "forces" is naturally a war term, and may mean either the armies or the wealth and military stores which are the sinews of war. The thought probably includes both the people themselves and their wealth, cattle and gold with them. H. C.—Upon this verse, perhaps combined with Zech. 14:7, is founded that beautiful and grand description, *the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day, for there shall be no night there* (Rev. 21:25). A.

12. This stands related to the previous verse as the penalty for *not* doing what is there required. All kings and all people must come to Christ to serve Him in His Zion, or must

perish. The grand crisis hour has come. Whoever yields to the truth and Spirit of God will receive Jesus as Lord and King, and join His people heartily in true homage, love and service to Him; but whoever among all the nations of the earth will not bow to Christ must perish utterly. This law of God's moral kingdom takes effect even now in its own way, and more and more palpably as the Lord's converting agencies become more powerful. Hence in those latter days of their final, transcendent power this law must obtain universally and none escape its decisive, resistless sway. H. C.

No nation can flourish and long continue that does not obey the law of God, or where the true religion does not prevail and the worship of the true God is not maintained. History is full of affecting illustrations of this. The kingdoms of Babylon, Assyria, Macedonia and Egypt, the Roman Empire and all the ancient monarchies and republics, soon fell to ruin because they had not the salutary restraints of the true religion, and because they lacked the protection of the true God. It is a maxim of universal truth that the nation which does not admit the influence of the laws and the government of God must be destroyed. No empire is strong enough to wage successful war with the great Jehovah; and sooner or later, notwithstanding all that human policy can do, corruption, sensuality, luxury, pride and far-spreading vice will expose a nation to the displeasure of God and bring down the heavy arm of His vengeance. *Barnes.*

Why have the names of Chaldea, Assyria and Egypt been starred upon the catalogue of nations? Children still continue to be born, and lullabies may still be heard upon the banks of the Euphrates, the Tigris and the Nile. Why, since the people are living, have the nations died? One verdict will answer for them all; one verdict and one epitaph. To say all in a single word, they died of immorality; and immorality is suicide. Seldom do nations die in any other way than by suicide. Nations that are bad may be employed by providence, as every nation has been employed in its turn; but the service rendered, not being a voluntary service, brings no honor to the instrument. Egypt, Assyria and Babylon stood simply upon their own moral character; and when this, by steady decline, had reached a certain point of baseness, they collapsed and fell. *R. D. Hitchcock.*

The nation that does not come up to the ideas of God for national life will sooner or later, empire, republic, monarchy or what, it

matters not, disappear from the map of the world. No form of government will save it, or political wisdom, if it gets in the way of the march of the kingdom of heaven and the purpose of God. *S. Burnham.*

13. "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee." This expression denotes

that all the cedars and other choice trees of Lebanon should contribute to the rebuilding and beautifying of God's Temple, which implies, in a spiritual sense, that everything should tend to adorn and render perfect the Church, which is called the house and building of God (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Cor. 3:9). *W. Louth.*—Many a Lebanon on earth, many a beauty of nature, has its own glory, wherein the glory of God in days to come will shine out once more, that a requital may follow for its long abuse through sin; and that the beautiful creation, not having been made in vain, may receive at length its due honor. *Stier.*

14. The Jerusalem or Zion of this passage is perfectly appropriate to the New Jerusalem, the Christian Church, not as it was, or is, or will be at any period of its history exclusively, but viewed in reference to the whole course of that history, and in contrast with the many disadvantages and hardships of the old economy.

16. All interpreters agree with the Targum in applying this verse to the influx of wealth and power and whatever else the kings and nations of the earth can contribute to the progress of the true religion. The figure is derived from De. 33:19, *they shall suck the abundance of the seas.* *A.*—The figures in the first clause need not be mistaken. She shall draw abundantly from the resources of all the Gentile nations and their kings; shall be enriched by their wealth and labors, and built up by their consecration to her interests. (See the same sentiment, chaps. 49:23; 61:6 and 66:12.) In her own joyful experience Zion shall know that Jehovah is her Saviour; that her own Messiah is the Almighty God. *H. C.*

17. *For brass I will bring gold.* This commences the description of the happy state of those times when the Gentiles should be led to embrace the true religion, and when the wealth of the world should be consecrated to the service of the true God. *Barnes.*—Dropping the figure, the sense will be that the piety of the Church will be of a type far more pure and true than in her former ages, less alloyed with human corruptions. Doubtless also it is implied here that her resulting morality is indefinitely purer, for God is wont to estimate piety by the morality which results from it.

The last clause shows that the thought is upon public morality; her officers, magistrates, will not be iniquitous and oppressive, as they were in the days of the old prophets, but will ensure peace and righteousness; or in this strong language, will *be* peace and will *be* righteousness. *H. C.*

18. Though waves may dash against them, and hosts, like overflowing billows, may come, yet God shall be the strength and the security of those walls, and they shall be for the safety of the people. And whenever those citizens have occasion to go forth in the presence of an enemy, it shall be with the voice of joy and of praise. Not only do the walls protect them, but they are joyful within them; and from the open gates no sound of lamentation or repining is heard, no effort to sue for terms of peace, no begging of terms with an encircling enemy, but the voice of praise and of joy ever rings forth; so that the walls are salvation and the gates are praise. The two ideas, it seems to me, that occur to every mind are these: that the Christian Church is a place of safety and a place of joy. *M. Simpson.*

19. *And thy God thy glory.* The honor of the Church shall be that it has the true God for its protector. Its joys shall be found, not in the beauty of created things, but in the glory of the Divine perfections, and in the laws and plans of the Almighty. The glory of the Church is its great head. His name, His attributes, His laws, His protecting care, constitute her main glory. It is an honor to the Church to have *such* a God and Redeemer; an honor to share His favor and to be under His ever-watchful care. The glory of the Church is not her wealth, her numbers, her influence, nor the rank and talent of her ministers and members; it is the character of her sovereign Lord, and in His perfections it is right that she should exult and rejoice. *Barnes.*

19, 20. Raising to its sublimest height the common Hebrew figure which represents calamity as darkness and prosperity as light, the prophet here sees such light and glory as no earthly sun and moon could produce. Hence the sun and the moon fade out as our stars are wont to do when the sun arises, and now God alone becomes the great Sun in the heavens of His Zion, irradiating her city by day and by night, for really there is no night there. The reader will note in this chapter the twofold use of light as a figure; first, to represent moral truth—its source and its power; and, secondly, its results in the blessedness of the people thus enlightened. First, Christ rises with His Gospel

as a light upon Zion, and through her instrumentality, upon the Gentile nations ; and then the blessed fruits of this light are represented as a glorious and perpetual day, of which God Himself is the sun that never sets. H. C.

The Christian Church is not the conqueror of the Jewish polity, but the heir and successor. The new covenant has been developed out of the old. There was no break when Christ came, but a fulfilment and a completion. And so the promises were handed down in the Christian line, among which these from the latter part of Isaiah, relating to the *stability* of the ancient Church, are not the least remarkable. They declare that God is an *everlasting* light to His people, that their permanence is like the permanence of the creation of God. Woolsey.

There are no phrases on which the sacred writers delight so constantly to dwell, when they would express the excellencies of God, as those derived from the external light. It is (as it were) consecrated into being the material representative and index of God in His inanimate creation ; and the Christian, who loves to hallow everything that is seen and heard and felt by associations of spiritual truth, is permitted to find in that which reveals all else, a faint revelation of that ineffable Supreme whom "no man hath seen or can see." "Jehovah"—cries the great prophet, rapt in vision of the future Church—"shall be to thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory !" W. A. B.

By the religion which brings us to God, we have the assurance of spheres of life beyond the present, whose glories as yet we cannot measure. It cannot be for less than such a transcendent effect that this religion has come from realms above our mortal sight ! It cannot be for less than that, that such unspeakable powers are in it ! The same supreme Person who has made His word the soul of history, who has been, as He claimed to be, "the Light of the world," declared that in the Father's house are many mansions, and that they who have followed Him here in spirit shall there at length behold His face, partake His glory. It seems to me to glorify life, it seems to me to banish the shadow of gloom from death, to feel that that majestic figure—of Brother, Teacher, Friend, Redeemer—which towers supremely over the centuries, which made the earth sublime by its advent, which seemed in ascending to unite it to the heavens, has equal place in worlds to come ! that we may trust His imperative word ; that we may serve His kingly cause ; that we may see the illumined

universe, for us as for Him, a house of victory and of peace ! that we may stand, by and by, with Him, amid the light as yet unreached, and say, each one : "I believed in Thy religion ! I saw its triumphs in the earth ; I felt its power in my heart ; I rose to God in love upon it ; I foreknew by it what now I find—eternal life !" Then all these wonders of the past shall lose themselves in vaster wonders still to come ; and saint and seer shall be our fellows in that immortal consummation ! R. S. S.

Thy mourning ended. Zion is not always to sit upon the ground and mourn in dust. The day of her redemption draweth nigh. Her prayer shall at length be heard, and God will come down for her deliverance. He will raise up hosts of faithful laborers to help us do this work. He will open wide and ripened fields for them to reap and garner. "The Lord shall make bare His holy arm, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God." Then will be realized the vision of the revelator in the apocalypse. That mighty angel, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, shall take His great commission from the throne, commence His flight in the midst of heaven, and bend His way and bear His message to every nation and kindred and tongue and people. Zion shall become an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations. Her sun shall no more go down, neither shall her moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be her everlasting light, and the days of her mourning shall be ended. Such shall be the eventual harvest of all our trials, hopes and tears. Our work is *great in its object—great in its difficulties, and great also in its promised results.* E. Thurston.

21. In the plainest literal language we have here the elementary ideas of the whole chapter, the secret of this wonderful prosperity in Zion and this unsullied glory and universal joy. All lies in two facts, the "people all righteous" and God, the glorious author of this stupendous moral transformation. His honor is involved in this grand moral enterprise, and He will never desist, will never deem the work done till the truth and Spirit of the Lord have won these sublime immortal victories over the powers of human depravity and of the prince of darkness. H. C.

21. That I may be glorified. We best glorify Him when we grow most like Him ; and we then act most for His glory when a true spirit of sanctity, justice and meekness runs through all our actions ; when we so live as becomes those that converse with the great

mind and wisdom of the whole world ; with that Being from whence all good flows, and in which there is no spot, stain or shadow of evil ; and so, being captivated and overcome by the sense of Divine loveliness and goodness, endeavor to be like Him and to conform ourselves as much as may be to Him. As God's seeking His own glory in respect of us is most properly the flowing forth of His goodness upon us, so our seeking the glory of God is most properly our endeavoring a participation of His goodness, and an earnest, incessant pursuing after the Divine perfection. When God becomes so great in our eyes and all created things so little, that we reckon nothing as worthy of our aims and ambition but a serious participation of the Divine nature and the exercise of Divine virtues—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness and the like ; when the soul, beholding the infinite beauty and loveliness of the divinity, and then looking down and beholding all created perfection mantled over with darkness, is ravished into love and admiration of that never-setting brightness, and endeavors after the greatest resemblance of God, in justice, love and goodness ; when conversing with Him by a secret feeling of the virtue, sweetness and power of His goodness we endeavor to assimilate ourselves to Him—then we may be said to glorify Him indeed *J. Smith.*

22. Under this Divine religion, whatever has in itself truth and righteousness and is carried forward according to God's mind, has assurance of outgrowth and multiplication in time to come. "A little one shall become a thousand"—or as the Hebrew runs—"the littlest of all," the superlatively insignificant, this shall become mighty and increase in power, even with the power of God. History has shown this to be true. Compare the weakness of England at the beginning of the Elizabethan age with Spain, strong, grasping, aggressive. Not so now. The scale has turned. So far as a people express in their life the principles of Christianity, in that measure they are strong. What a shining, golden harvest for the long hereafter was sown by our Colonial fathers two hundred and forty years ago ! Rightly founded, they believed that these colonies would grow to great commonwealths. A little one did become a thousand and a small one a great nation. So is it with every institution planted in the fear and love of God, with an aim to advance His glory and man's good. Its life and increase are assured, for it becomes God's work and enlists God's aid. So, notably,

the growth of the missionary enterprise. The latter was almost unknown a century ago. It began in the "reveries" of men or the dreams of Christian women, who began by collecting small amounts and consecrating them to Christ. Now modern missions are a power, immense, world-embracing. They emphatically illustrate the grace of Christ, present and dominant in the world. So it is with every endeavor. That which has the element of righteousness in it God will care for. It has a vast future before it. R. S. S.

I the Lord will hasten it in its time. I will do it in the proper time (LXX). The sense is, that this would be done at the proper time, called in Gal. 4 : 4 "the fulness of time." There were preparations to be made before it could be accomplished. The nations, under the Divine arrangement, were to be put into a proper position to receive the Messiah. He was not to come until the experiment had been fairly made to show how weak and feeble man was without a revelation—to show that philosophy, and learning, and the policy of statesmen could do nothing effectual for the salvation of men. He was not to come until the world should be at peace, and until there would be facilities for the rapid propagation of religion in all lands. Nor until all that had been said in prophecy should be fulfilled, until all the circumstances should combine which had been foretold as favorable to the introduction of the reign of the Messiah. But *when* that period should arrive, when the world should be in a proper state to receive the new system, then the Lord would "hasten" it. There would be no unnecessary delay ; none which the circumstances of the case did not call for. So it will be in the universal spread of the Gospel referred to in this chapter. When the world shall be moulded into a proper state to welcome the Gospel, when the nations are *prepared* to receive it, and welcome it, and profit by it, then the universal propagation shall be *hastened*, and a nation shall be born in a day. Then truth shall be diffused like the spreading light of the morning, and the world shall be brought under the saving power of the Gospel. Meantime for the coming of that day we should pray and labor. By the diffusion of truth ; by schools ; by the spread of the Bible ; by preaching ; by the translation of the word of God into every language ; by establishing the press in all the strong points of pagan influence ; by placing missionaries in all the holds of power in the heathen world, and by training up many to enter into the harvest, the

Christian world should prepare for the universal conversion of the world to God. In due time it shall be hastened, and "He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37). *Barnes.*

It is well known, by the instrumentality of how incompetent persons, a few fishermen of no authority, address or education, and in how short a compass of time, this great revolution, the greatest that ever was in the religious world, was effected. In about forty years the Gospel was preached in almost every region of the world then known; this speedy propagation of it could never have been effected by persons so unequal to the task, had not the same Divine Spirit who foretold it assisted them in it, according to the promise here given, "I the Lord will hasten it in its time." *Bp. Newton.*

God is hastening the time when not only the doctrine of popular liberty, but the greater and inclusive doctrine of a Divine redemption, enunciated through a purely taught Gospel, shall become the open faith of mankind. And for the furtherance of this blessed result how wondrous the work of God's providence, wrought through these later years in compacting the nations of the world, in multiplying the facilities for their mutual intercourse, and in the transmission of thought in common to all. Into how few centres is He concentrating political power, and into what close relations and sympathies is He bringing all the nations! By the setting of voicing wires beneath the pathway of all the seas and oceans, not only the *doings* of men in every nation, the transactions of government and commerce, are instantly known in every other, but what is of vaster moment far, the world itself becomes a great whispering gallery for the interchange of

thought and opinion among its varied peoples. And for what purpose are these facilities of intercourse, this exchange of thought, to what end this binding of the nations together, this making the world one, save that predicted by the prophet concerning the time of the approaching end, "that many should run to and fro, and knowledge, the knowledge of a Redeeming God," shall be increased; "that that knowledge of the Lord may cover the earth as the waters the sea;" nay more, that all flesh may glory in the coming of the Lord, and all nations accept His sovereign sway! B.

This wonderful, towering prophecy is embosomed on each side, before and after—*flanked* we might say—with promises of the Spirit. Immediately before it we read, "This is My covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever." Then opens chap. 60, with an implied and most emphatic *therefore*: *Therefore*, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come; and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee," etc. At the other end of this majestic prophecy we read: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good things to the meek," etc.—of which you will remember that Jesus said at Capernaum (Luke 4:17-22): "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."

The Spirit of God upon Jesus and upon His people, their crowning glory, the high tower of their strength—such is the strain of Old Testament prophecy. H. C.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LXI.

61 : 1 THE spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek ; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God ; to comfort all that mourn ; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness ; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and aliens shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the priests of the LORD : men shall call you the ministers of our God : ye shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. For your shame ye shall have double ; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion : therefore in their land they shall possess double : everlasting joy shall be unto them. For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery with iniquity ; and I will give them their recompence in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples : all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed.

10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God ; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with a garland, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth ; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

Chap. 61. After describing the new condition of the Church, he again introduces the great Personage by whom the change is to be brought about. His mission and its objects are described by Himself in verses 1-3. Its grand result shall be the restoration of a ruined world (verse 4). The Church, as a mediator between God and the revolted nations, shall enjoy their service and support (verses 5, 6). The shame of God's people shall be changed to honor (verse 7). His righteousness is pledged to this effect (verse 8). The Church, once restricted to a single nation, shall be recognized and honored among all (verse 9). He triumphs in the prospect of the universal spread of truth and righteousness (verses 10, 11). A.

The Messiah Himself appears, indicating His special mission (verses 1-3) ; the fruit of His labors upon human well-being (verse 4) ; the accession of new laborers to Zion and their work (verses 5, 6) ; the stupendous changes wrought in Zion in her transition from the Mosaic to the Christian age (verse 7) ; the grounds or reasons why Jehovah has wrought this change and will make it permanent (verse 8) ; how the Gospel will vindicate its worth and

glory before the nations (verse 9) ; the Messiah rejoicing in the magnificent results of His mission and in the omnipotence of God pledged to insure them (verses 10, 11). Compared with chap. 60, which treats mainly of the results of Gospel truth in the better days of the Christian age, this chapter falls back somewhat to treat more fully of the *causes* of these results ; of the manner in which the Messiah becomes a light to the nations ; of His condescension and compassion in ministering to the humble, the lowly, the sin-bound and the heart-broken ; but soon the course of thought glides insensibly into the same channel, the workings and results of the Gospel system. H. C.

1-3. These opening words were chosen by our Lord at Nazareth for the solemn introduction of His public ministry (Luke 4 : 16, 17). He opened the Book of Isaiah, found this passage, read the first six clauses, and then added : " This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." That Messiah Himself speaks in these words rests on His own Divine authority. But it results no less plainly from the context. No mere prophet could appoint and give to all Zion's mourners the oil of joy and the garment

of praise, or assume the title in verse 8, "I Jehovah love judgment." Says Cocceius, "He, in whom these characters are found, is He of whom Isaiah speaks." Our Lord claimed to be the great Prophet, as attested by His mighty miracles (verses 21, 23), to whom this promise refers. Not only is He this Anointed One, but His work of mercy, in preaching glad tidings to the poor, was then actually begun. *Birks.*

The reasons for supposing the speaker to be the Messiah are entirely conclusive. For He and He only is the Head of this entire Gospel mission and work which leads the thought in this context and is the great subject of the preceding chapter. He is the Redeemer who comes to Zion (59 : 20), and upon whom the Spirit of the Lord rests and abides, as well as upon His people also through Him (59 : 21). This allusion to the Spirit of the Lord in the close of chap. 59 has special value in this argument because the passage lies in the context, and indicates the course of thought. Then moreover, the same view is amply supported by previous Messianic prophecies in which the baptism of the Messiah with the Spirit of God is made prominent—*e.g.*, chaps. 11 : 2-5 and 42 : 1. These considerations are abundantly sufficient ; yet let it still be said that further support comes from those prophecies which represent the Lord as giving His messiah a message of truth to deliver, words to proclaim to His people, as here stated—*e.g.*, Isa. 42 : 6, 7, "I the Lord will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison. Also 49 : 2 ; 50 : 4 ; 51 : 16. H. C.—It is matter of certainty that, in the judgment of the ancient Jewish Church, the person spoken of in all these passages was the Messiah ; so that, in applying to Himself that particular passage in Isaiah, Jesus not only advanced the claim, but He must have been perfectly understood by those present to advance the claim, to be the Messiah of the Jewish prophets. And of all that had been spoken concerning Him by the prophet Isaiah, there is not a passage to be found that could more fitly have been appropriated by Jesus than the one He read at that opening stage of His career, as it describes Him in respect to the whole reach and compass of His Divine commission, with all its restorative energies and beneficent results. We see as well the wisdom of the selection as the justness of the application. It is also to be noted, that the appropriation by our Lord of the passage in this sixty-first chapter of Isaiah gives the virtual sanction of His authority to the applications elsewhere made of

other passages in the same prophetic discourse to Gospel times—such as Matt. 12 : 18-21 ; Acts 8 : 32-35 ; 13 : 47 ; Rom. 10 : 21 ; 1 Pet. 2 : 23-25, where portions of Isa. 42, 49, 53 are so applied. *P. Fairbairn.*

Christ joined two disciples as they walked to Emmaus, "and beginning at Moses and all the prophets He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." He claimed that He was in every part of the Old Testament. Touch those venerable records where you will, with the finger of faith, and you are thrilled by the presence of Christ. He is the Word. He is incarnated in the Bible as truly as He was in the body of Jesus of Nazareth. Every part of the Bible is necessary to the complete revelation of the Divine Redeemer, as every member and organ of that human body was to the Word made flesh. *Interior.*

The Divine Christ belongs not exclusively or especially to the past. He is at this moment all that He was eighteen centuries ago—all that He has been to our fathers—all that He will be to our children. He is the Divine and infallible Teacher, the Healer and Pardoner of sin, the Source of all graces, the Conqueror of Satan and of death—now, as of old, and as in years to come. He is ever the same. *Liddon.*

The living, life-giving Christ ! That is our sole and sufficient theme. A life disloyal to Him is the fundamental heresy. The constraint of His sweet and awful love is the essential orthodoxy. Christ, the Sacrifice for sinners ; Christ, the Teacher of the ignorant ; Christ, the King of faithful souls ; the Emancipator of moral slaves ; the Consoler of the sorrowing ; the sure Hope of the dying ; the Guide of the baffled children of God ; the Heaven of glorified multitudes innumerable on high ; my Christ, your Christ, humanity's Christ ; He alone is the truth, the life, the bond and the test of the true Church of God. *McPherson.*

In Christ's devotional spirit, in His holiness, in His exertions to promote the Divine glory, in His tenderness for immortal souls, in His zeal to do those around Him good, in His self-denying perseverance, in His tender charity, His generous love, His meekness, His patience, His forgiveness of injuries—in these and all other moral excellences of His character, He stands before us for our study, or admiration, or imitation. Though we cannot work miracles like Him, we may imitate His acts of mercy, His prodigies of benevolence ; though we cannot prophesy, we may yet proclaim His truth and make known His salvation ; though we cannot

forgive sins, we may yet pardon affronts and injuries; though we cannot die as atoning sacrifices for the sins of those around us, we may yet make many sacrifices for their sakes; and we may imitate His patience, His meekness, and suffer what befalls us for His sake," in the spirit in which He suffered. *R. Hall.*

It is indeed true, as a saint who knew Christianity from the life, once said in his heart-winning way, "One might well consent to be branded and broken on the wheel, merely for the idea of such a character as Christ's; and if any one should be able to mock and deride, he must be insane. Every man, whose heart is in the right state, will lie in the dust, and rejoice, and adore." It is true; even as a bare idea, the spiritual image of Jesus which the Bible holds out to us is the most dignified and the most precious which is known to our race. It is the most sublime idea to which, in the province of morality and religion, the human mind has been raised. Let it be a fable, it is still the most noble truth which has been either received or communicated by the human mind, and preponderates, even as a fable, over a thousand verities of ordinary experience. But it is not a fable; it is not a bare idea; for the man who was able to produce, from his own invention, such a character, such a pattern, must himself have possessed this greatness of soul, if we deny that he observed it in another. We must transfer the spiritual and moral greatness of Jesus to His biographer if we deny it to Himself. If we glance at the greatest characters which have been exquisitely portrayed to us by the creative power and art of the most gifted poets, do we find in these characters anything like that which is developed in Jesus? And these plain, uncultivated, Jewish evangelists, *they* forsooth desired to invent such a character! *they* forsooth were able to invent it! How far, as an unaided man, did each of these writers of Memorabilia stand below Xenophon and Plato; and yet how high, in its silent majesty, stands the simple image of Jesus, which the unlettered evangelists present, above the character that is given to the wisest Greeks by the two masters of language and rhetoric! *Ullmann.*

1. The original, translated "to preach good tidings," is the word which has occurred repeatedly in the sense of preaching the Gospel—*e.g.*, 40:9; 41:27 and 52:7. "Binding up," applied to the broken in heart, carries out the figure and refers to the consolation and peace of an humble trust in God, which naturally heals the wounded spirit. (Cf. chap. 57:15, 18, 19.) Liberty to the captive draws its figure

and terms from the day of Jubilee which gave freedom to all Hebrew bondmen. Both this "liberty to the captive" and "the opening of the prison to the bound" must be referred to spiritual bondage, the slavery in which sin and Satan hold their victims, and from which Christ sets them free. *H. C.*

The Gospel of Christ, the Word Incarnate of God, entering into our life is indeed good tidings—good tidings to the poor—as reaching down to the lowest depths where humanity still lingers, and growing with man's growth to the utmost bounds of his possible attainments, reaching and growing without limit, for if it could be shown that any human powers lie without the range of its benediction; that any form of man's distress and perplexity are inaccessible to its consolation; that any parts of nature or history are in conflict with its premises, then I should feel compelled to write against this also the sentence of dreariness and desolation, and look for another. But the Gospel of Christ is subject to no such condemnation. It shows us that the Divine is the foundation of the human and (most overwhelming wonder) that the human is the fulfilment of the Divine. It turns our thoughts from what we can do to what God has done and is doing. It discloses in the idea of creation a splendor which communicates its light to all created things. It pierces to the depths of misery, and brings back even from their darkness a promise of hope. It transfigures all personal suffering by the thought of a fellowship with God in Christ. It is a new, an eternal commandment in which all things, our utmost hopes and efforts, are shown to be of Him, and through Him, and unto Him. From the foreign mission field, and from the home mission field, the same story comes, that the vision of life has been brightened, the work of life has been quickened, the wounds of sin have been healed by the old—and ever new—tidings of Jesus and the resurrection, and above all that this Gospel has been found to be a Gospel powerful to transform the nature and the circumstances of men. *Bp. Westcott.*

The effects of the work of Christ are even to the unbeliever indisputable and historical. It expelled cruelty; it curbed passion; it branded suicide; it punished and repressed an execrable infanticide; it drove the shameless impurities of heathendom into a congenial darkness. There was hardly a class whose wrongs it did not remedy. It rescued the gladiator; it freed the slave; it protected the captive; it nursed the sick; it sheltered the orphan; it

elevated the woman; it shrouded as with a halo of sacred innocence the tender years of the child. In every region of life its ameliorating influence was felt. It changed pity from a vice into a virtue. It elevated poverty from a curse into a beatitude. It ennobled labor from a vulgarity into a dignity and a duty. It sanctified marriage. It revealed for the first time the angelic beauty of a Purity of which men had despaired and of a Meekness at which they had utterly scoffed. It created the very conception of charity, and broadened the limits of its obligation from the narrow circle of a neighborhood to the widest horizons of the race. And while it thus evolved the idea of Humanity as a common brotherhood, even where its tidings were *not* believed—all over the world, wherever its tidings *were* believed, it cleansed the life, and elevated the soul of each individual man. *Farrar.*

It was before Deity, embodied in a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the synagogue, and the doubts of the academy, and the pride of the portico, and the fasces of the lictors, and the swords of thirty legions were humbled in the dust. *Macaulay.*

2. It was not to announce a period well known before, but to proclaim that such a year of mercy, a great antitype of the year of jubilee, was now begun. Here our Lord paused at the opening of His message, and only added much later the warning of "the days of vengeance" (Luke 21 : 20-24), when this mercy had been despised. *Birks.*

"The acceptable year of the Lord," when "liberty was proclaimed to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound," evidently refers to the jubilee; but in the prophetic sense, it means the Gospel state and dispensation, which proclaims spiritual liberty from the bondage of sin and Satan, and the liberty of returning to our own possession, even the heavenly inheritance, to which, having incurred a forfeiture by sin, we had lost all right and claim. *J. T. Bannister.*

2, 3. He was to be a Comforter, and so He is, as Preacher, Healer and Deliverer; He is sent to "comfort all who mourn," and who, mourning, seek to Him and not to the world for comfort. Christ not only provides comfort for them, and proclaims it, but He applies it to them; He does by His Spirit comfort them. There is enough in Him to "comfort all who mourn," whatever their sore or sorrow is; but

this comfort is sure to them who "mourn in Zion." To these Christ has appointed by His Gospel and will give by His Spirit those consolations which will not only support them under their sorrows, but turn them into songs of praise. *H.*

3. **Beauty for ashes, etc.** A description of the change of habit and appearance that should take place in proportion to the change of circumstances. While they were mourners, they used to put ashes on their heads; now they were to wear a crown or diadem; for the word rendered here "beauty" signifies an ornament proper to the head, and is so translated (Ezek. 24 : 17). *W. Louth.*

That the efficacy of *Sorrow* for the great work of self-abasement is mighty scarcely requires a statement. Affliction is the very voice of God speaking to the heart of man its nothingness. Sermons may fail, but sorrow is more eloquent than sermons. It is not the Gospel, but it is the herald of the Gospel; it is the very "voice of Him that crieth" in the vast "wilderness" of the desolated heart, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in this desert a highway for our God!" Surrounded by all earthly comforts, we may not comprehend the message, "Comfort ye!" But when around us lie shattered the hopes and dreams of that fleeting prosperity, when we walk among ruins, ourselves a ruin, *then* God's time is near, His hand is busy in that chaos, the "broken heart" is there which He has promised not to spurn, and His Spirit (which works by means and times and seasons) is even now about to weave of the dark substance of that grief the "garment of praise" of which His prophet has spoken—the adorning meet for the everlasting kingdom! *W. A. B.*

Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord. He was to be a Planter, for the Church is God's husbandry. Therefore He will do all this for His people, will cure their wounds, release them out of bondage and comfort them in their sorrows, "that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord," that they may be such, and be acknowledged to be such; that they may be ornaments to God's vineyard, and may be "fruitful in the fruits of righteousness," as the branches of "God's planting" (chap. 60 : 21). All that Christ does for us is to make us God's people, and some way serviceable to Him as "living trees," planted in the "house of the Lord" and "flourishing in the courts of our God;" and all this "that He may be glorified;" that we may be brought to glorify Him by a sincere devotion

and an exemplary conversation ; for " herein is our Father glorified, that we bring forth much fruit ;" and that others also may take occasion from God's favor shining on His people, and His grace shining in them, to praise Him ; and that He might be foverer " glorified in His saints." H.

The Christian is entered on the catalogue of the Lord's vineyard as a tree of righteousness, and is expected to bring forth much fruit. If his growth in grace is small and his fruitage unto holiness is meagre, he is little better than the barren fig tree that was a cumberer of the ground. He disappoints the hopes and grieves the heart of the husbandman. The condition of fruitfulness is very simple and is clearly stated by our Saviour. " He that abideth in Me and I in him." As long as the union is kept up between the branch and the vine the branch bears abundantly. It derives all that it needs from the vine. It has not to do, but only to cling and to receive. The new life comes by faith. But it is a faith that quickens and that leads to intense activity. When the warm rain visits the roots of a healthy vine, and the sap rises and pushes out in all the branches, those branches begin to unfold leaf buds and fruit buds. The life that they receive manifests itself in growth. One who knew not the secret of that growth would think that the branch itself was working the wonders that are revealed. And so it is in spiritual growth. The Christian by his union with Christ is quickened. He puts forth new graces of the Spirit and new activities in the Divine life as the result of that quickening. His faith in Christ works by love. That is its nature, and unless he represses the normal action he must bring forth much fruit. *Interior.*

Looking over the scope of these first three verses, it may well excite our admiration that the sublimely glorious results of chap. 60 are effected by agencies and methods so mild and gentle, so condescending and compassionate, so fraught with loving-kindness and matchless mercy.

4. " They" in this verse are those stable Christians, spoken of above as " trees of righteousness." What they shall do has been already expressed under the same and similar figures in chaps. 49 : 8 ; 54 : 3 and 58 : 12. The idea is, they repair the wastes and desolations of sin wrought during the ages in which Satan has had sway. The figure conceives of these desolations as *external*—i.e., ruined villages ; burned cities ; fields wasted by war, or impoverished by slave culture ; but the underly-

ing sense is rather of those usages in society, those habitudes of thought, those immoral, depraved maxims and sentiments which shut out God, and pervert man's moral convictions and thus make the *souls of men* desolate. H. C.

Godliness develops such graces of the spirit as love, faith, meekness and humility. It produces the fruits of righteousness. It feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, visits those who are sick and in prison ; and all this it does not for reward, or applause, but solely to glorify God who has planted it in the warm, mellow soil of His grace, watered it with the influences of His Spirit, and set the sun of righteousness in the firmament of redemption to shine upon it. *Babb.*

6. The persons addressed here, " Ye" who are to be " priests of the Lord," comprise all God's true-hearted Gospel laborers, whether Jew or Gentile, and with special reference to those who do the work of the Gospel ministry. They are to be amply sustained by their Christian brethren. They are to fill a sphere analogous to that of the ancient priests, and, like them, must live at and of the Temple. (See Paul's doctrine, Rom 15 : 27 ; 1 Cor. 9 : 11 and Gal. 6 : 6.) That they shall " eat the riches of the Gentiles," may also mean that God in His providence brings the resources of wealth, industry and art into the service of His Zion, transferring from unconsecrated commerce and perhaps from ungodly hands the resources and powers of art and of Christian civilization, to the use of His Gospel kingdom. H. C.

The essential idea here and in Rom. 15 : 27 is that the Church, the chosen people, or the Israel of God, is charged with the duty of communicating spiritual things to those without, and entitled in return to an increase of outward strength from those who thus become incorporated with it. But it is not merely in this lower sense that the people of God are in the law (Ex. 19 : 20) and the Gospel (1 Pet. 1 : 3), as well as in the prophets, represented as the ministers and priests of God. Not only as instructors and reclaimers of the unbelieving world do they enjoy this sacred dignity, but also as the only representatives of their Great High Priest, in Him and through Him possessing free access to the fountain of salvation and the throne of grace (Heb. 4 : 14-16). In this respect, as in every other which concerns the method of salvation and access to God, there is no distinction of Jew and Gentile any more than of Greek and barbarian, male and female, bond and free ; but all are Christ's, and Christ is God's, and all alike are priests and ministers of God. A.

The world does not read the Bible nor come to church. All it learns about Christ and the Christian life it must learn from those who bear Christ's name and represent Him. If all church-members lived truly consecrated lives, loyal to Christ in business, in pleasure, in all things, it is impossible to estimate what the saving power of the Church would be in example alone. . . . There is a silent, personal influence that goes out from every one, and this influence is always leaving results and impressions wherever it touches. You cannot live a day and not touch some other life. Our influence depends upon what we *are* more than upon what we do. It is by living a beautiful life that we bless the world. We need not underestimate holy activities. Good deeds must characterize every true life. But if the life itself is noble, beautiful, holy, Christ-like, one that is itself a benediction, an inspiration, the worth of the influence is many times multiplied. . . . We get the largest measure of good for ourselves from what we do when our first aim is to do good to another. If you would get the best from any good thing, receive it from God, and then hasten to minister it in Christ's name to others. The richest blessing comes not in the receiving, but in the giving and doing. J. R. M.

7. When the riches of the Gentiles pass over into the hands of Zion in the sense of the verse previous, then instead of Zion's former shame, she shall have double; instead of confusion, being ashamed and confounded because of her relative weakness, she now has a joyous portion, a lot in which she may well exult, so that in their land they shall have double strength and glory, and it is to them an everlasting joy. H. C.

8. An enunciation of the general truth, that the Divine justice renders absolutely necessary the destruction of His obstinate enemies, and the deliverance of His people from oppression. (Cf. 2 Thess. 1:6-8.) A.—If men do not do justice, He loves to do judgment Himself in righting them that suffer wrong, and punishing them that do it. God pleads His people's injured cause not only because He is jealous for them, but because He is jealous for justice. To illustrate this, it is added, that He "hates robbery for burnt offering;" He hates injustice even in His own people, that honor Him with what they have in their burnt offerings. It is a truth much to the honor of God, that ritual

services will never atone for the violation of moral precepts, nor will it justify any man's robbery to say, "It was for burnt offerings;" or "Corban—it is a gift." Behold, "to obey is better than sacrifice, to do justly and love mercy better than thousands of rams;" nay, that robbery is most hateful to God which is covered with this pretence, for it makes the righteous God to be the patron of unrighteousness. H.

9. The meaning is not merely that all seeing them shall acknowledge that they are a seed, etc., but that all seeing them shall recognize them by recognizing the effects and evidences of the Divine blessing. The true application of the verse is to the Israel of God in its diffusion among all the nations of the earth, who shall be constrained by what they see of their spirit, character and conduct to acknowledge that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed. The glorious fulfilment of this promise in its original and proper sense may be seen already in the influence exerted by the eloquent example of the missionary on the most ignorant and corrupted heathen. A.

10. **I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.** Those that rejoice in God have cause to rejoice greatly, and we need not fear running into an extreme in the greatness of our joy, when we make God the "gladness of our joy." The first Gospel song begins like this, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Luke 1:46, 47). There is just matter for this joy, for salvation and righteousness are wrought out and brought in, and the Church is clothed with them. H.

11. The glory of the promise is its universality, in which the fulfilment will no doubt be coextensive with the prophecy itself. A.—The Lord has ordained that righteousness and praise shall spring up with a vigorous and sure growth before all the nations, even as the warm bosom of the earth pushes forward the seed planted therein to germination, growth and fruitage. The Gospel is to be an effective and glorious moral power for the regeneration of society and of human hearts in all the ends of the earth! In this the Messiah rejoices with exceeding great joy. This universal victory of truth and righteousness is the "joy set before Him" (as this prophecy plainly shows), "for which He endured the cross, despising the shame." H. C.

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LXII.

- 62:1** For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth.
- 2 And the nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory : and thou shalt be called by
- 3 a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of beauty
- 4 in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken ; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate : but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah : for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall
- 5 be married. For as a young man marieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee : and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.
- 6 I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem ; they shall never hold their peace day
- 7 nor night : ye that are the LORD's remembrancers, take ye no rest, and give him no rest,
- 8 till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat
- 9 for thine enemies ; and strangers shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured : but they that have garnered it shall eat it, and praise the LORD ; and they that have gathered it shall drink it in the courts of my sanctuary.
- 10 Go through, go through the gates ; prepare ye the way of the people ; cast up, cast up the
- 11 high way ; gather out the stones ; lift up an ensign for the peoples. Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the earth, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation
- 12 cometh ; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompence before him. And they shall call them The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD : and thou shalt be called Sought out, A city not forsaken.

Chap. 62. The words of the great Deliverer are continued from the foregoing chapter. He will not rest until the glorious change in the condition of His people is accomplished (verse 1). They shall be recognized by kings and nations as the people of Jehovah (verses 2, 3). She who seemed to be forsaken is still His spouse (verses 4, 5). The Church is required to watch and pray for the fulfilment of the promise (verses 6, 7). God has sworn to protect her and supply her wants (verses 8, 9). Instead of a single nation, all the nations of the earth shall flow unto her (verse 10). The good news of salvation shall no longer be confined, but universally diffused (verse 11). The glory of the Church is the redemption of the world (verse 12). A.—The Messiah is still the speaker, expressing His untiring zeal and unflagging interest in this promised glorious enlargement of Zion. He will never rest till it be fully accomplished (verse 1) ; what it shall be in its fulness ; how it shall affect the honor and glory of the true Church ; the accession of the Gentiles ; the love felt for the cause of God and of truth—stand forth under various figures (verses 2–5). So also how the Messiah commissions His spiritual watchmen (verses 6, 7) ; what the Lord hath solemnly sworn as to the

future protection and safety of His people (verses 8, 9) ; a command to Gentile nations to prepare to come into Zion and the proclamation to this effect, going forth to the ends of the earth (verses 10, 11). United with the former Zion, they become known everywhere as the holy people, the Lord's redeemed, a city never more forsaken (verse 12).

This division of chapters should not interrupt the flow of thought, for originally these chapters (61 and 62) were one continuous discourse. The division was made not by Isaiah, but at a period long subsequent, and only for more convenient reference to its various parts. H. C.

1. *The glorified Christ is constantly working for His Church.* We are too apt to regard our Lord's real work as all lying in the past, and, from the very greatness of our estimate of what He has done, to forget the true importance of what He evermore does. "Christ that died" is the central object of trust and contemplation for devout souls—and that often to the partial hiding of Christ that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. But Scripture proclaims the full accomplishment of all the purposes of His earthly ministry ; it emphasizes the trium-

phant completion of His redeeming work by His death; it proclaims the majesty of His nature, which returns to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was; it shows to the world, as on some coronation day, their King on His throne, girded with power and holding the far-reaching sceptre of the universe; it prophesies for men, in spite of all present sin and degradation, a share in the dominion which manhood has in Christ attained, for though we see not yet all things put under Him, we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor. It prophesies, too, His final victory over all that sets itself in unavailing antagonism to His love. A. M.

2. What this new name indicates the passage proceeds shortly to show (see verse 4). That this new name comes from God indicates that He Himself gives her these qualities and relations.

3. Thou shalt be an object of superb and glorious beauty, enjoying the infinite protection and love of thy God. The crown, especially the royal diadem, is the highest earthly type of whatever is splendid, gorgeous, glorious. The Church is such in God's hand. Her being such a crown *in the hand* of her God may signify perhaps that her beauty is His handiwork—her righteousness, the fruit of His spiritual creation; and yet the most obvious and prominent suggestion is rather that she is there in the beauty and glory which He gives her, enjoying His unfailing protection and undying love. H. C.

4. "*No more shalt thou be called Azubah (Forsaken), and thy land shall no more be called Shemamah (Desolate); but thou shalt be called Hephzibah (my delight is in her), and thy land Beulah (Married), for Jehovah delights in thee, and thy land shall be married.*" The joyful change of condition is further expressed in the prophet's favorite manner, by significant names. It is probable that they were all familiar to the Jews as female names in real life. This we know to have been the case with two of them: the mother of Jehoshaphat was named Azubah (1 K. 22:42), and the mother of Manasseh Hephzibah (2 K. 21:1). It is better, therefore, to retain the Hebrew forms, in order to give them an air of reality as proper names, and at the same time to render them intelligible by translation. A.

"As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." No enraptured bridegroom ever had love to his loved one so warm, and strong, and pure as that of the lover and seeker of souls to the souls He

loves, and finds, and marries, and "leads" home, rejoicing. That nothing and no one may come between Him and them, He asserts strongly, jealously, the husband's right—"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom"—claims each recovered one as engaged, and forever affianced to Himself, names the name of each with a lover's tenderness, and "leads" them through these earthly scenes toward "the King's palace." *Raleigh.*

6, 7. The promise is a general one, or rather the command that those who are constituted guardians of the Church should be importunate in prayer to God on her behalf. A.—They shall never hold their peace, even as the Messiah declares of Himself (verse 1), "I will not hold My peace;" "I will not rest," until Zion's righteousness shall go forth as brightness. This is therefore essentially His command to His Gospel ministers to imbue their souls with His quenchless spirit of zeal, love and labor, and to prosecute their work as He does His. "Ye that make mention of the Lord" is literally, "Ye that *remind* the Lord," or call things to His remembrance. The sense I take to be, remind the Lord of His promises; plead them with importunate prayer; bring up the case of Zion with unceasing supplication. H. C.

The Lord, who has declared His own purpose of unwearied action for Zion, here associates with Himself the watchmen whom He appoints and endows for functions in some measure resembling His own, and exercised with constancy derived from Him. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night." On the promise follows, as ever, a command (for all Divine gifts involve the responsibility of their use, and it is not His wont either to bestow without requiring, or to require before bestowing), "Ye that remind Jehovah, keep not silence." There is distinctly traceable here a reference to a twofold form of occupation devolving on these Christ-sent servants. They are watchmen, and they are also God's remembrancers. In the one capacity, as in the other, their voices are to be always heard. The former metaphor is common in the Old Testament, as a designation of the prophetic office, but, in accordance with the genius of the New Testament, as expressed on Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out on the lowly as well as on the high, on the young as on the old, and all prophesied, may be fairly extended to designate, not some select few, but the whole mass of Christian people. The watchman's office

falls to be done by all who see the coming peril, and have a tongue to echo it forth. The remembrancer's priestly office belongs to every member of Christ's priestly kingdom, the lowest and least of whom has the privilege of unrestrained entry into God's presence-chamber, and the power of blessing the world by faithful prayer. The gifts then here promised, and the duties that flow from them, are not the prerogatives or the tasks of any class or order, but the heritage and the burden of the Lord to every member of His Church. *Christ* sets the watchmen; He commands the remembrancers. From Him flows the power, from His good Spirit comes the desire, to proclaim the message. That message is the story of His life and death. But for what He does and is we should have nothing to say; but for His gift we should have no power to say it; but for His influence we should have no will to say it. By His example, by His gifts, by the motive of His love, our resting, working Lord says to each of us, "Ye that remind God, keep not silence." Let us answer, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest." A. M.

A strange word of encouragement to importunity, *Give Him no rest*; suffer Him not to be in quiet till *He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth*. A few such suitors in these times were worth thousands such as we are. Our prayers stick in our breasts, scarce come forth, much less do they go up and ascend with that piercing force that would open up the way for deliverances to come down. *Leighton*.

8, 9. Under images drawn from her ancient history, the Lord predicts her future purity and prosperity.

10. As we have seen, the course of thought here is of prayer and labor for the extension and purity of Zion, for the conversion of the Gentiles and the glory of Christ's kingdom in this world. The Messiah has given the strongest expressions of His devotion to this work, and has summoned His watchmen to the same pure and unceasing devotion. Now in harmony with this line of thought, this verse exhorts the whole Church to take away every obstacle to the return of Gentile converts into Zion. "Go forth from your city gates; prepare the highway; elevate it well; clear out the stones; and then raise aloft the Gospel banner toward which those Gentile hosts may direct their steps as they come to Zion." H. C.—This is a prediction of the increase of the Church or chosen people by the accession of the Gentiles. The gates are then the gates of the ideal Zion

or Jerusalem, the passage is an inward not an outward passage, and the exhortation of the text is one to all concerned, or all who have the opportunity to take away obstructions and facilitate their entrance. A.

Cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones. Not only do modern *ways* prove the need of such preparation, but modern customs show how, when, and why it is done. When Ibrahim Pasha proposed to visit certain places on Lebanon, the emeers and sheikhs sent forth a general proclamation, somewhat in the style of Isaiah's exhortation, to all the inhabitants, to assemble along the proposed route, and prepare the way before him. The same was done in 1845, on a grand scale, when the present Sultan visited Brusa. The stones were gathered out, crooked places straightened, and rough ones made level and smooth. The exhortation to gather out the stones is peculiarly appropriate. These farmers do the exact reverse—gather up the stones from their fields, and cast them into the highway, and it is this barbarous custom which in many places renders the paths so uncomfortable, and even dangerous. *W. M. Thomson*.

11. The Lord sends forth His proclamation to the end of the world because it is to be a matter of profound interest to all Gentile nations that God is announcing to His Zion the coming of her Saviour, who moreover comes not in vain, but with success made sure. His reward is always in hand, so certain is it made by Divine covenant and promise. "Work" has here also the sense of *reward* of his work, the expected and desired result. H. C.

11, 12. It shall be proclaimed to the captives, that they are set at liberty, and may go if they please; it shall be proclaimed to their neighbors, to all about them, "to the end of the world," that God has pleaded Zion's just, injured, and despised cause. Let it be said to Zion, for her comfort, "Behold thy salvation comes," thy Saviour, who brings salvation; He will bring such a work, such a reward, in this salvation, as shall be admired by all; a reward of comfort and peace with Him; but a work of humiliation and reformation before Him, to prepare His people for that recompense of their sufferings; and then, with reference to each, it follows, they shall be called "the holy people" and "the redeemed of the Lord; the work before Him," which shall be wrought in them and upon them, shall denominate them a holy people, cured of their inclination to idolatry, and consecrated to God only; and the reward with Him, the deliverance wrought for

them, shall denominate them "redeemed of the Lord," so redeemed as none but God could redeem them; and redeemed to be His, their bonds loosed, that they might be His servants. II.

12. The holy people. Holiness involves the reference of life and self to God, consecration to and service of Him. It is not a mere equivalent of purity, but distinctly carries the higher reference. The obedience is not to a law, but to a Lord. The perfection does not consist in conformity to an ideal standard,

but in likeness and devotion to God. A. M. —Holiness is conformity to the character of God. To have fellowship with Him in His characteristic feelings and principles; to love what He loves; to hate what He hates; to desire what He promises; to rejoice in His will in all things, even when it crosses our own will; to learn to say from the bottom of the heart, even in the agony of conflict, "Not my will, but Thine be done"—this is to be holy; and every nearer approach to this is an advance in holiness. *E. Bayley.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTERS LXIII., LXIV.

63:1 Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the peoples there was no man with me: yea, I trod them in mine anger, and trampled them in my fury; and their lifeblood is sprinkled upon my garments, and I have stained all my raiment. For the day of vengeance was in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I trod down the peoples in mine anger, and made them drunk in my fury, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.

7 I will make mention of the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us; and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. For he said, Surely, they are my people, children that will not deal falsely: so he was their saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and grieved his holy spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? where is he that put his holy spirit in the midst of them? that caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses? that divided the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? that led them through the depths, as an horse in the wilderness, that they stumbled not? As the cattle that go down into the valley, the spirit of the LORD caused them to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name. Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy mighty acts? the yearning of thy bowels and thy compassions are restrained toward me. For thou art our father, though Abraham knoweth us not, and Israel doth not acknowledge us: thou, O LORD, art our father; our redeemer from everlasting is thy name. O LORD, why dost thou make us to err from thy ways, and hardenest our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance. Thy holy people possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. We are become as they over whom thou never barest rule;

64:1 as they that were not called by thy name. Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that

2 thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence ; as when
 fire kindleth the brushwood, *and* the fire causeth the waters to boil : to make thy name
 3 known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence ! When thou didst
 terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at
 4 thy presence. For from of old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath
 5 the eye seen a God beside thee, which worketh for him that waiteth for him. Thou meetest
 him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways : behold,
 thou wast wroth, and we sinned : in them *have we been* of long time, and shall we be saved ?
 6 For we are all become as one that is unclean, and all our righteousnesses are as a polluted
 7 garment : and we all do fade as a leaf ; and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. And
 there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee : for
 8 thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us by means of our iniquities. But now,
 O LORD, thou art our father ; we are the clay, and thou our potter ; and we all are the work
 9 of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever : behold,
 10 look, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. Thy holy cities are become a wilderness, Zion
 11 is become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where
 our fathers praised thee, is burned with fire ; and all our pleasant things are laid waste.
 12 Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O LORD ? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict
 us very sore ?

Chap. 63. This chapter and the following relate to the same general subject, and should not be separated. The subject with which they are introduced is the destruction of the enemies of God, and this is followed by tender expressions of confidence in Jehovah, and by earnest supplications on the part of His people that He would interpose in their behalf. *Barnes.*

Amid the glowing descriptions of Zion's purity, enlargement, and triumph, through which the prophet has borne us in the four chapters next preceding this, there have been brief intimations of hostile powers and of God's visitations of retribution upon them—*e.g.*, chaps. 59 : 18, 60 : 12. Here in verses 1-6 this subject is resumed for a more distinct and full presentation. Remarkably this passage is the counterpart of chap. 34, in the earlier prophecies. Here as there, Edom is the representative of the malignant, determined enemies of Zion. Here as there, the Divine Avenger and Redeemer of Zion goes forth in the might of His strength, and the blood of the slain fills the foreground of the picture—here, staining all His raiment ; there, making His sword drunk with blood, and washing the mountain sides with torrents of gore. This description is the more brief, as might be expected in a case of renewed mention. With verse 7 a new subject is commenced which fills the remaining portion of this chapter and also chap. 64. The prophet sees the true Zion as she stood historically during the age immediately preceding the first advent of Christ, struggling up through scenes of blended affliction and sin, under an

almost crushing sense of ill-desert and unworthiness, grasping the promises of God in faith and prayer, and gathering strength from His past mercies. Hence it abounds with most earnest expostulations, importunate pleadings, and precious allusions to God's manifestations of mercy in former ages. H. C.

The influx of the Gentiles into Zion having been described in the preceding verses, the destruction of her enemies is now sublimely represented as a sanguinary triumph of Jehovah or the Messiah (verses 1-6). The prophet then supposes the catastrophe already past, and takes a retrospective view of God's compassions toward His people, and of their unfaithfulness during the old economy (verses 7-14). He then assumes the tone of earnest supplication, such as might have been offered by the believing Jews when all seemed lost in the destruction of their commonwealth and temple (verses 15-19). A.

1. The prophet is singing of the victorious Messiah. He, that majestic figure that haunts all Hebrew history—He it is that comes up from Edom (which stands here to represent the sum of all the foes of Israel) with stained garments that show the terribleness of the struggle, and with step and face that manifest the completeness of His victory. It is the triumph of the Messiah that is being sung. This brings it, as you see, close to us. This Hebrew Messiah has come, and is more than the Hebrew Messiah : He is the Christian's Christ, He is our Saviour. See how the old vision is elevated once more to a yet larger application. The victory of Christ, the destruction of evil by good, the conquest over the devil by the Son of God, at cost, with

pain, so that as He comes forth His robes are red with blood; the redemption of mankind from sin by the Divine and human Saviour—this is the largest and completest meaning of the ancient vision. *Bp. Brooks.*

Who is this that cometh? The prophet asks the question; the personage who responds may best be regarded as the Messiah Himself. The prominence given to His person in chaps. 59: 20, 21; 60: 1-3; 61: 1-3, 10, 11, and 62: 1, 6, 11, makes this construction almost necessary. The course of thought and the logic of the context demand it. Then it is entirely in harmony with the spirit of other Messianic prophecies—*e.g.*, Ps. 2 and 110; and with the doctrine of the New Testament—*e.g.*, Matt. 28: 18, and its numerous parallel passages; also with Rev. 19: 11-21. In this prophetic vision the scenes of slaughter are recently past and the Great Redeemer and Avenger of His people is seen returning from the fearful carnage—His garments scarlet-dyed, blood-stained; Himself marching in triumph as a conqueror returning with renewed consciousness of power from a victorious conflict with His foes. The prophet cries, Who is this, so glorious in His apparel, so majestic in His mien? The answer reveals Him, “I that speak in righteousness,” saying only with truth and doing only in justice—doing in the way of just retribution all that I have threatened for deliverance to My people and for destruction to My incorrigible foes. “Mighty to save” gives prominence to the idea that these judgments on Edom were demanded by the interests of salvation to His people. *H. C.*

The prophet wonders at an object which presents itself. This object is a Conqueror returning bloody from battle: of whom, by way of dialogue, and in answer to the questions, who He is, and why so habited, an account is given; representing a mighty victory, obtained with much blood and slaughter, won by the powerful but single arm of this mighty Warrior; by which a total rout was given to His adversaries at a time when, if He had not interposed, no other was disposed, no other able, to have quelled the outrage and havoc which they were making. His stained garments demonstrate the sharpness of the engagement, as His mien and manner of approach denote the invincible greatness of His strength. In this description we have represented the hardships and the success of that combat with the enemies of our souls, by which Christ brought salvation to mankind; vanquishing sin and death, wresting the prey out of the hands of Satan, and, as the apostle

expresses it, “having spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them in His cross.” *Dean Stanhope.*

It is Christ that is thus magnificently described, returning to His capital, from the land of the enemy, after His passion. *Bp. Horne.*—His “coming from Edom” is His rising from the dead; His return “from Bozrah” His coming back, having vanquished hell: Idumea standing for the kingdom of darkness and death, and Bozrah (the strong city of Edom) for the seat of the prince of darkness; agreeably to the custom, so familiar with the prophets, of putting the sworn enemies of the commonwealth of Israel to express the mortal and immortal enemies of the souls of God’s people. *Bp. Andrews.*

The Christ depicted by rationalism is a pure creation of modern imagination, an ideal and unreal personage, wholly unlike the majestic being, whom prophets foretold, to whom the evangelists bore witness, who was preached of the apostles, received up into glory, and has ever since borne unequalled sway in the history of the Church and the nations. The fiction is with the modern critics; the fact is found in the old and ever-living faith. Such an abstract ideal of human excellence, such a cold and chaste purity of unearthly perfection, such a spiritual mystic, full of contemplation and revery, such a mere moral teacher, ministering only as a man, in pity and love, to other men’s natural necessities and social well-being, is not the real, living Christ, who has drawn men unto Him; is not the Divine Man, who has renovated the human conscience, and elevated the religious consciousness of the race, and been the heart and life of the spiritual conflicts and the spiritual life of mankind for eighteen hundred years. But the attributes and qualities, which rationalism denies and disowns, are the very ones which have given Christ His rule over man’s heart and history. It is Christ the Son of God, Christ the Lamb of God, Christ the resurrection and the life, the Christ who conquered Satan and brake the bands of death, and came in righteousness, mighty to save, the Christ in whom man has found the present Deity. He, and He only is it, whom the human heart and conscience have exalted to a spiritual throne, to be the Lord and Arbiter of man’s eternal destiny. The Christ of rationalism is an unhistoric figment; the Christ of history is the Incarnate God.

The Christ of rationalism cannot meet the demands of man’s religious nature and needs. It leaves the whole problem of sin unsolved; is

gives no assurance of forgiveness ; it gives us only a God afar off, and not a God near to all the wants and necessities of the human soul. And, not looking to the past, if we were now to interrogate human consciousness as to its real religious wants and its present beliefs, it would still answer as of old, that it finds these met in a Christ, who blends the natural and the supernatural, the Divine and the human, an incarnate Deity who came to redeem a fallen race. The Christ of the Bible and the Christ of the historic Church is the very Christ whom man now craves ; and He is still a living presence in every living and believing soul. *H. B. Smith.*

Mighty to save. We cannot go to Him too often, nor ask of Him too much. We have no sin but He has a pardon for it ; no weakness but He has strength for it ; no cankering care but He has relief for it ; no grievous sorrow but He has comfort for it ; no bleeding heart-wound but He has balm to soothe and a bandage to bind it up. It is impossible for us to expect too much from His generosity, or trust too implicitly to the bounties of His providence and the aids of His Spirit. It is equally easy for God to supply our greatest as our smallest wants, to carry our heaviest as our lightest burden. In the most desperate cases of sinners and in the darkest circumstances of saints, "when all power is gone" and there seems no outlet or deliverance, God is mighty to save. *T. Guthrie.*

2. It is a slight but effective stroke in this fine picture, that the first verse seems to speak of the stranger as still at a distance, whereas in the second he has come so near as to be addressed directly. *A.*

3. The Orientals crushed their grapes for wine with the foot, thus staining their garments with the red juice of the grape. This furnishes the figure here. *H. C.*—The most satisfactory solution of the second sentence seems to be that these words are added to convey the idea that all the nations were on the adverse side, none on that of the conqueror. The sense will then be not that they refused to join in trampling others, but simply that they were among the trampled. As if he had said, I trod the press alone, and all the nations, without exception, were trodden in it. By all the nations we are of course to understand all but God's people. While the impossibility of applying the expression to our Saviour's sufferings cannot be too strongly stated, there is no need of denying that the figure may be happily accommodated in the way suggested ; as many expressions of the Old Testament may be applied to different objects

with good effect, provided we are careful to avoid confounding such accommodations with the strict and primary import of the passage. *A.*

The expression "I have trodden the wine-press alone" is commonly applied to Christ in the loneliness of His agony in Gethsemane, and in His desertion through the scenes of His trial and crucifixion. And there could not be a more vivid picture of the solitariness of the Saviour in His sufferings—when "of the people there was none with Him ;" when, as He lay upon the ground in His bloody sweat, His disciples were sleeping within sound of His groaning ; when, as the traitor seized Him, "all the disciples forsook Him, and fled ;" and Peter mustered courage to follow Him afar off, only to deny Him at the last. Yet the connection shows that it is not the Redeemer in His sorrows, but in His triumphs, who is here depicted. He is coming from Edom, the typical enemy of Israel, where by His unaided strength He has visited judgment and destruction upon the foes of His Church. It is the same picture which is repeated in Rev. 19 : 13, of the "Word of God clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, who treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." Yet love and mercy ever predominate over judgments. His judgments upon the obdurate illustrate His grace to the penitent ; and often, as with Israel of old, judgments recall His people to their dependence upon His grace. The Saviour identifies Himself with His flock. He makes their affliction His own, and will make them partakers in His triumph and joy. *J. P. T.*

4. This figurative statement of the text in its broadest meaning furnishes the key to the grand tragedy of human history. Though having special reference to Moab and Edom, the eminent foes of Israel, yet the great fact it declares has been, in substance, enacted among all nations, in all ages of time until now. Of nation after nation the *true* record of history is written before in the word of the prophet, that *He* has "trodden them in the wine-press of His wrath," of people after people that were, but are not ; that He "has put down their strength to the earth." Among the empires destroyed before His first coming, and the nations that have perished since, has Christ the Avenger been enacting judgments in behalf of His redeemed. All His judgments have been in the earth that its inhabitants might learn His righteousness and accept His redemption. So has it been in the whole past, in substance the day of God's vengeance has been in order that the year of His redeemed might be brought on. So it is

to-day, so will it be to the end of the period in which He enacts judgments against nations in the flesh. There is no grander truth than this for our conception, none besides this which solves effectually the sore problem of God's tragic providences in man's history. For this declares that His judgments in every age and upon every scale have been in the interest of His redemptive purpose and plan. B.

Through Oriental caste and despotism, the license of the Greek democracy, the iron, imperial power of Rome, the perilous luxury of monarchies and the aristocracy, passive obedience to kings and hierarchies, has the race made its suffering course toward the blessings of representative government and religious liberty. Through the conflicts of race with race, of the sons of Shem with the sons of Japheth, of Asiatic with European prowess, of the Latin with the German stock, of the Celt with the Saxon, have we fought our way to the knowledge of the Christian principle that the race is one and a brotherhood, and that freedom shall yet be given unto all. Each of the greatest battles of the race has been a step in the progress of human rights. *H. B. Smith.*

5. Fury here takes the place of righteousness in chap. 59:16, not as a synonym, but as an equivalent. God's wrath is but the executioner and agent of His justice. Upon either He might therefore be described as exclusively relying. A.—The meaning is that Jesus Messiah is equal by Himself alone to the exigencies of righteous retribution upon the guilty nations of men. His people never need fear any failure in the resources of His power, whether to save themselves or to destroy His unrepentant foes.

6. "Make them drunk in My fury" is the conception of the wine-cup of the Lord's indignation which He passes round for guilty nations to drink, to madden them for self-destruction. In Jer. 25:15-31 this conception is fully expanded. It appears frequently and with great pertinence and force in other prophets.

1-6. This passage proves that Christ is mighty to save His people by *destroying their enemies*. From this the inference is entirely legitimate that He is mighty to save them in every possible relation—against every sort of foe. The former, however, is the thing here affirmed. The latter comes from it by inference only.

7. The portion that follows, to the end of chap. 64, treats of Zion's sins and sufferings; her struggles of faith and prayer, and her reminiscences of God's mercies, called up to revive

her spiritual strength. Remarkably the passage begins with this view of past mercies. The verb, "I will mention," is the same which occurred in chap. 62:6, "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence;" and means either to recall to one's own mind or to remind another.

9. The phrase, "The angel of His presence" leads the mind to that uncreated angel whose presence was guaranteed to Moses in behalf of Israel and was manifested in the pillar of cloud and of fire throughout their journeyings in the wilderness. (See Ex. 23:20-23.) He was God's very presence. God was present *in him*, for this must be the legitimate sense of the phrase, "My name is in him." This same angel is identified with the presence of Jehovah, and with Jehovah Himself (Ex. 33:12-23; 34:5-9); and also at the bush (Ex. 3:2, 4-6). A careful examination of these and kindred passages in the Old Testament, coupled with New Testament allusions to them, will show most fully that the great Personage who revealed Himself in the Old Testament ages, sometimes under the name, "The angel of the Lord," and often simply as "the Lord," was no other than the Messiah Himself, the Son of God, "the brightness of the Father's glory," the great Revealer of God to man, and the supreme head of the Church under the old economy no less truly though less palpably than under the new. It was He who saved them; who also bare them all the days of old as a tender mother carries in her arms her infant babe. H. C.

Even Hitzig admits the identity of the angel of Jehovah's presence with Jehovah Himself, but explains it away by making angel an abstract term, not denoting in any case a person, but the manifestation of Jehovah's presence at a certain time and place. Hendewerk, on the other hand, alleges that the angel is always represented as a personality distinct from Jehovah Himself. By blending these concessions from two writers of the same great school, we obtain a striking testimony, if not to the absolute truth, to the scriptural correctness of the old Christian doctrine, as expounded with consummate force and clearness by Vitrina in his comment on this passage—viz., the doctrine that the angel of God's presence, who is mentioned in the passages already cited, and from time to time in other books of the Old Testament (Gen. 28:13; 31:11; 48:16; Ex. 3:2; Josh. 5:14; Judges 13:6; Hos. 12:5; Zech. 3:1; Mal. 3:1; Ps. 34:8), was that Divine Person who is represented in the New as the brightness of

the Father's glory and the express image of His person (Heb. 1:3), the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15), in whose face the glory of God shines (2 Cor. 4:6), and in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9). A.

In Mal. 3:1 it is plain that "the Messenger, or Angel of the covenant," the covenant of grace, was no other than Christ; and as allusion is made to the same Person in all the other passages before mentioned, and in the words of Isaiah in the text, it follows that He who appeared to Moses, He who was seen by Manoaah, He who was spoken of by Zechariah, He whom Isaiah describes as saving and redeeming Israel, must also be Christ. In the language of the prophet, Christ is styled "the Angel of God's presence;" but mark the authority and dignity of His person; sometimes He is called "Wonderful;" sometimes "the Lord;" sometimes He is said to have "the name of God in Him;" and sometimes He is styled "God." He, therefore, to whom such appellations are given, can be no created being; he must be the Eternal Son of God; he must be "the Word of God," by whom God speaks to mankind; He must be the same that "was in the beginning with God, and was God;" the same "by whom all things were created;" the same who was made man, the same who redeemed us, the same who ever liveth to make intercession for us. *Bp. Huntingford.*

Let us not overlook the fact that God does not sit aloft in remote and inaccessible seclusion from our human trials. They are more real to God than they are to us. No being in the universe feels the woes of human life so deeply as He feels them. Not one pang of suffering rasps any human nerve which God does not appropriate as if it were His own. This is the working of infinite sympathies in the heart of a loving Creator. "In all their affliction He was afflicted." The true value of any human life consists in identifying it with the life of God. In such supreme alliance, no man can be unhappy. And no man can be happy without it. Life without God is *not* worth living. All that afflicts men here is one dull, dead weight of woe, unless it is lifted and upborne by God. *Phelps.*

In all our afflictions He is afflicted. Having had experience in our outward and inward sufferings, Christ knows and compassionates our case. The sweetness and worth of all these our passions and sensibilities are in Him as God-man, and therefore He is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and is moved to intercede

for us, with a perpetual memory of what we are and what we need. H. H.—We would pray better and more, and with vaster confidence, if we would in our supplications pray as though we thought God's Son was going to take our suit and plead it before the Father, not because He wants to have *us* gratified simply, but because He is one of us, one in us, and His pulse beats with ours, and our distresses are His distresses. C. H. P.

Of one thing every child of God may be sure, in the hour of His suffering or of His sorrow, and that is that He is not Himself more deeply interested in His present trial than His Saviour is interested in that trial in His behalf. Nothing comes to pass, in the experience of a believer, that the Saviour is not fully familiar with; nor does the Saviour ever fail to be touched with the feeling of all the infirmities of His every follower with which He is thus familiar. Here is a source of cheer in every sorest need. S. S. T.

His extraordinary sensibility to human feeling became operative at once as sympathy, was at once translated into action. All was felt which human feeling felt, and then all was sympathized with actively, till at last, upon the cross, all the sorrows of the world were taken in to Himself and borne in the activity of voluntary suffering, that they might be forever, in the end, lifted off the heart of mankind. It is there, when intense sensibility to the want, and woe, and sin of men had led Him to absolute self-sacrifice through sympathy—there, in that bowed head and broken Manhood—that we realize at last, in the radiance of love which eye hath not seen, the King in His perfect beauty. *S. A. Brooke.*

Such occult emanations of compassion from the heart of our Lord are going into all the homes of sorrow where believing men and women suffer. They are vibrating on the air invisibly the world over. They bring the afflicted into a very sacred alliance. What they suffer Christ suffers. For this He became a Man of Sorrows. Do we long in our desolateness for human fellowship? Our Redeemer is a suffering man. Do we faint for the want of a more than human strength? Our Redeemer is the Son of God. Our very commonest and most homely griefs He lifts up into the embrace of His divinest sympathies, and invests them with the glory of His atoning pains. This is a faithful saying, that in some way we know not how, if we suffer we shall also reign with Him. *Phelps.*

The lessons only which have cost us pain,

which we have learned in struggle, which have been born out of anguish of heart, will heal and really bless others. It is when we have passed through the bitterness of temptation, wrestling with evil and sore beset, victorious only through the grace of Christ, that we are ready to be helpers of others in temptation. It is only when we have known sorrow, when the chords of our love have been swept by it, and when we have been comforted and helped to endure, that we are fitted to become comforters of others in sorrow. *J. R. Miller.*

In His love and in His pity He redeemed them. No lost soul shall murmur hereafter that the tender loving-kindness of God has not willed to save it. No saint in glory shall pretend that aught in him has been accepted and crowned save the infinite merit, the priceless gifts of his Redeemer. The dying love of Jesus embraces the race, and yet it concentrates itself with direct—as it seems to us—with exclusive intensity upon each separate soul. He dies for all, and yet He dies for each; as if each soul were the solitary object of His incarnation and of His death. Beneath the cross we may each of us legitimately fix our soul's eye on the great Sufferer, and we may say with His apostle, "He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*." *Liddon.*

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but should have eternal life." The little child who has learned his earliest lessons of what Father and Son, loving and giving, trust and life mean, by the sweet experiences of his own father's home and his mother's love, can grasp these blessed words. They carry the deepest mysteries which will still gleam before us unfathomed in all their profundity, unappropriated in all their blessedness, when millenniums have passed since we stood in the inner shrine of heaven. Wonderful the word which blesses the child, which transcends the angel before the throne! *A. M.*

10. His Holy Spirit. This form of expression assumes that God sends forth the Holy Spirit as a distinct personality, and causes Him to dwell within the people. To this we find allusion in Neh. 9:20, "Thou gavest also thy Good Spirit to instruct them;" and in Hag. 2:5, "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you; fear not." Stephen had his eye on the same great fact when (Acts 7:51) he charged it upon the hardened Jews of his time; "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye." *H. C.*

The Holy Spirit may be so vexed by opposition, so quenched in His influences by godless indifference, that He will recognize the sinner as hopelessly corrupt and desperately beyond recovery—his spiritual disease incurable. With such recognition He probably abandons the soul forever. As we can only be saved by the Holy Ghost, men are as ruined when He departs as if they had committed the unpardonable sin. His departure never takes place while salvation is a possibility. When the Holy Spirit departs from a soul, it ripens for perdition. As well may the Ethiopian attempt to change the color of his skin as for a man to dream of salvation when deserted by the Holy Spirit. Isaiah refers to such desperate resistance to His office-work as transforms God into man's enemy. He says of the Israelites: "They rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them." David speaks of God as "giving men up to their own lusts," and permitting them to "walk in the way of their own counsels." *Leach.*

12, 13. These verses continue the thoughtful questions which the people propose to their own hearts as they think of the God of their fathers, the fountain of former mercies. "Who marched them through the deeps; as a horse in the wilderness, so they *will not stumble*." The prophet seems to see them moving forward; compares their advance to that of a horse marching sure-footed along the desert, and predicts with all confidence, "he will not stumble!" Under God's guiding hand, all obstructions will be removed, and their course being wisely directed, they will not fail.

14. Following the tenses closely, the course of thought in this verse may be expressed thus: "As beasts (tame animals of the flock or the herd) will go down into the valley for their repose; so the Spirit of the Lord will give him (Israel) rest"—i.e., under His protection. "So, in this way, thou hast in all past ages led Thy people to make for Thyself a glorious name." This last clause generalizes the facts of the nation's history, showing especially that God had wrought among them and for them to the end of glorifying His own name. To "give Israel rest" is the usual phrase for locating them in Canaan after a whole generation of unrest in the wilderness. (See De. 12:9, 10; Ps. 95:11.) *H. C.*

15, 19. An earnest supplication in view of the condition of Israel. The arguments are very beautiful and various for His interposition. 1. An appeal to Jehovah in view

of His former mercies (verse 15). 2. An argument from the fact that He was their Father, though they should be disowned and despised by all others (verse 16). 3. Earnest intercession from the fact that His enemies had trodden down the sanctuary, and that those who never acknowledged Him ruled in the land that He had given to His own people (verses 17-19). 4. An earnest pleading with God in view of the inestimable value of the favors which He conferred—the fact that the world could confer nothing to be compared with His favor (chap. 64 : 1-5). 5. An argument derived from the general prevalence of irreligion among the people (verses 6, 7). 6. Affectionate pleading from the fact that they were His people (verses 8, 9). 7. Argument from the fact that the holy city was waste ; the temple in ruins ; that the holy and beautiful house where their fathers worshipped had been burned up with fire (verses 10-12). *Barnes.*

15. *Look (down) from heaven and see from Thy dwelling-place of holiness and beauty! Where is Thy zeal and Thy might (or mighty deeds)? The sounding of Thy bowels and Thy mercies toward me have withdrawn themselves.* The foregoing description of God's ancient favors is now made the ground of an importunate appeal for new ones. The unusual word for dwelling-place is borrowed from the prayer of Solomon. A.—An earnest appeal to God to look compassionately upon their woeful state, tenderly (not reproachfully) asking where His former interest in their behalf is now, and where those sublime manifestations of His power ; and intimating that the outflow of His warm sympathies for them has been checked, restrained. H. C.

16. The true sense of the verse, as it appears to me, is that the Church or chosen people, although once, for temporary reasons, coextensive and coincident with a single race, is not essentially a national organization, but a spiritual body. Its father is not Abraham or Israel, but Jehovah, who is and always has been its Redeemer, who has borne that name from everlasting ; or as Hitzig understands the last clause, He is our Redeemer, whose name is from everlasting. According to this explanation, this verse explicitly asserts what is implied and indirectly taught throughout these prophecies, in reference to the true design and mission of the Church, and its relation to Jehovah, to the world and to the single race with which of old it seemed to be identified. The strong terms of this verse are of course to be comparatively understood not as implying that the

Church will ever have occasion to repudiate its historical relation to the patriarchs, or cease to include among its members many of their natural descendants, but simply as denying all continued or perpetual pre-eminence to Israel as a race, and exalting the common relation of believers to their great Head as paramount to all connection with particular progenitors—the very doctrine so repeatedly and emphatically taught in the New Testament. A.

Thou art our Father. Notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, and though we should be disowned by all others, we will still believe that Thou dost sustain the relation of a Father. Though they were suffering and though they saw no human aid, yet their confidence was unwavering that He had still tender compassion toward them. God had often manifested for them a kind paternal care, and they believed that He had still the same regard for them. *Barnes.*

He made us, and is *our Father* by creation ; He preserves us, and is *our Father* by His providential care ; He has in His mercy taken us into His family, and is therefore *our Father* by adoption ; He has redeemed us by His infinite love, and delivered us from the yoke of our sins and from bondage to Satan, and is *our Father* by that act of redemption. *Maldonatus and Dion. Carthusianus.*

This, instead of being less true than earthly relationship, is the one relationship which, when a man enters into, he ceases to be homeless and a wanderer, a fugitive and vagabond upon the face of the earth and from the face of God—ceases to be a mere withered leaf borne helpless on the wind, whose origin none cares to trace, and whose destiny none turns to see ; he has found his place in the universe, he has found a hold and a hope, and however in himself unstable, weak, and incapable, he rests enduringly in the unchangeable Father. He has been outside, thinking the world a strange, cold, barren, friendless and unsatisfying place ; he has wandered about, not seeing, “through the thick cloud,” and still less dreaming that One was seeing and caring for him, and now he finds he has a Father, One to love, One to serve, One to glorify, One to worship. *Dods.*

“How is God connected with *me*? How is He affected toward *me*?” are questions of infinite interest to a rational being. The answer of Christ to these questions is simple and explicit, conveyed in a single word of profound significance and of surpassing tenderness—the word *Father*. To man this term belongs emphatically, and it is one of the wealthiest in

human language ; and men can have no difficulty in comprehending all its meaning. The relation it indicates has no such interpretation among other intelligent creatures as it finds in this world. There is no fatherhood or childhood among angels, no derivation of being from one to the other. Only men on earth are connected together in this extraordinary sense ; and from the imperfect type existing among themselves *they* at least are able to rise to the supreme reality in God. The human spirit is the offspring, the immediate and direct offspring of the ever-living Spirit. It is capable of bearing, and does bear, and it is the only thing that bears or is capable of bearing a resemblance to God. When we have said that God *created* the heavens, the earth and all material things, we have exhausted all of which the subject admits. But it is not simply true that He *created* minds also ; *He is the Father of minds* and of nothing else. This peculiar relation of God to man is beautifully suggestive of authority, the very highest form of which known in this world is the parental. God is a King, but He is a Father-King ; His subjects are His own children, and His government of them, in its essential spirit, in all its laws and its acts, is strictly and only parental. He is wise, He is righteous, He is just. His holy purpose shall stand, He must and will do all that is necessary for the good of the entire universe. But paternal love is the element in which God lives and reigns ; it is the moving force in the spiritual universe ; infinite desire to produce happiness, to fill creation with the largest possible amount of enduring joy. *J. Young.*

Our Redeemer. The "Kinsman-Redeemer" would be the nearest rendering of the original term (*Goel*), but even this fails adequately to convey the deep significance of the Hebrew. A more exact definition would be "a person related by blood, who by right of consanguinity lays claim to and redeems a person or thing, vindicates the rights involved or avenges the wrong sustained" (*Glass*). But it is in its spiritual aspect that it was made the subject of so much solicitude in the law, and the very name assumed so frequently in the prophets as a designation of the Divine Redeemer, and the relation which as such He sustained toward His people. *D. Macdonald.*

17. The Scriptures use strong language concerning that providential agency of God which permits temptation to occur and to have force enough to tempt men into sin. They speak of God as doing Himself what He suffers to be done by other agencies than His own. H. C.

18. It cannot be proved that this whole passage has respect to the Jews in their present dispersion : first, because the sufferings of the Church in after ages are frequently presented under figures drawn from the peculiar institutions of the old economy ; and secondly, because the early history of Israel is as much the early history of the Christian Church as of the Jewish nation, so that we have as much right as the Jews to lament the profanation of the Holy Land, and more cause to pray for its recovery by Christendom, than they for its restoration to themselves. A.

Chap. 64. This chapter continues and completes the course of thought which commences with chap. 63 : 7. This portion is prayer throughout, blending intercession with confession of sin. The prophet expresses sentiments, feelings, prayers, adapted to the case of the true Church, the few found faithful among the many faithless, in the age next before the coming of their Messiah. They see the Jewish nation as such about to be disowned of God as His people and doomed to ruin ; and their trembling hearts cry out, "Must the real Zion perish too? Will not our own redeeming Father interpose to save?" H. C.

This chapter, like the one before it, from which it is in fact inseparable, has respect to the critical or turning point between the old and new dispensations, and presents it just as it might naturally have appeared to the believing Jews—*i.e.*, the first Christian converts, at that juncture. The strongest confidence is expressed in the Divine power, founded upon former experience (verses 1-3). The two great facts of Israel's rejection as a nation, and the continued existence of the Church, are brought together in verse 4. The unworthiness of Israel is acknowledged still more fully (verses 5, 6). The sovereign authority of God is humbly recognized (verse 7). His favor is earnestly implored (verse 8). The external prerogatives of Israel are lost (verse 9). But will God for that cause cast off the true Israel, His own Church or people? (verse 10). A.

1. In the Hebrew Bibles this verse stands at the close of the previous chapter. The division in our English version is better. Still better than either would be no division at all between these chapters. The course of thought is unbroken. H. C.—The passionate apostrophe in this verse, far from being injured or obscured, is rendered more expressive by its close connection with the previous complaints and lamentations. The idea now suggested is, that weary of complaint the people or the

prophet speaking for them suddenly appeals to God directly with an ardent wish that He would deal with them as in days of old. The remaining words are a poetical description of Jehovah's interposition or the manifestation of His presence, under figures drawn perhaps from the account of His epiphany on Sinai. A.

That the mountains might flow down at Thy presence. The idea here is, that the presence of Jehovah would be like an intense burning heat, so that the lofty mountains would melt and flow away. It is a most sublime description of His majesty, and is one that is several times employed in the Bible. Thus in relation to His appearance on Mount Sinai, in the song of Deborah (Judg. 5 : 4, 5) :

The earth trembled and the heavens dropped,
The clouds also dropped water.
The mountains melted from before Jehovah,
Even Sinai from before Jehovah, the God of Israel.

So Ps. 97 : 5 :

The hills melted like wax at the presence of Jehovah,

At the presence of Jehovah [the God] of the whole earth.

So also in Micah 1 : 3, 4 :

Lo, Jehovah cometh forth out of His place,
And will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth,
And the mountains shall be molten under Him,
And the valleys shall be cleft,
As wax before the fire,
And as the waters pour down a precipice.

—Barnes.

Since the judgment of the flood God has withdrawn into heaven in order henceforth to reveal Himself from thence in judgment and blessing. It cannot, however, remain so. All human aspiration henceforth unites in the sigh : "Oh, that Thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down." The end toward which history now strives is that God shall again make His abode among men. "The Shechinah," says an old Midrash, "abode originally here below ; after Adam's fall it withdrew ever deeper and deeper into heaven, and with Abraham began its gradual return." We know wherein this return of God to man culminated. Viewed from this elevation the post-diluvian history of redemption appears as a road, now ascending and now descending, which on the whole leads ever higher, and in the end reaches the summit. *Delitzsch.*

3. The plea is, that God had appeared wonderfully for His people formerly and "Thou

hast," therefore "Thou wilt," is good arguing at the throne of grace. They plead what He had done for His people Israel in particular when He brought them out of Egypt. H.

4. The more easy and natural translation is : "From of old men have not heard, nor have they perceived through the ear, nor hath the eye seen a God besides Thee who will do so for one waiting upon Him." The sense is, "No other God has been heard of or seen since the world began who will do such things for His waiting people ; none who has such power to do ; none who has such a heart to do ; none who has shown Himself in fact so mighty to save." This thought comes in here, inspiring confidence in regard to the prayer just offered. Paul (1 Cor. 2 : 9) uses a part of the language of this verse to express the fact that certain great truths of the Gospel had remained unknown, a mystery, until Christ's coming. H. C.

Men have not heard nor seen what God has prepared for those that wait for Him. Observe the character of God's people ; they are such as wait for Him in the way of duty, wait for the salvation He has promised and designed for them. Observe where the happiness of this people is bound up ; it is "what God has prepared for them," what He has designed for them in His counsel, and is in His providence and grace preparing for them, and preparing them for ; what He has "done" or "will" do ; so it may be read. It is all that goodness which God has "laid up for them that fear Him" and "wrought for them that trust in Him."

5. "Thou meetest him that rejoices, and works righteousness ; meetest him with that good which Thou hast prepared for him" (verse 4), "and dost not forget those that remember Thee in Thy ways." We are here told what we may expect from God, if we thus attend Him in the way of duty : "Thou meetest him." This speaks the friendship, fellowship, and familiarity to which God admits them ; He meets them, to converse with them, to manifest Himself to them and to receive their addresses. It denotes likewise His freeness and forwardness in doing them good ; He will "prevent them with the blessings of His goodness," will "rejoice to do good" to them that "rejoice in working righteousness," and wait to be gracious to those that wait for Him. He meets His penitent people with a pardon, as the father of the prodigal met his returning son. He meets His praying people with an answer of peace, while they are yet speaking (chap. 65 : 24). H.

6, 7. Again the prophet, speaking for the

faithful few, confesses and deplors the prevailing wickedness of the nation. Almost literally, their sins had been a tornado to sweep the nation away. The most fatal fact in their condition was that no men of prayerful interceding spirit remained. There was no one who roused himself up to take strong hold upon God in prayer. H. C.

6. "As filthy rags." The works of the flesh and of Pharisaic pride are here meant, not those fruits of the Spirit which are "an odor of a sweet smell, acceptable to God through Christ." So Vitrina well remarks: "This saying, against the scope of the prophet, is often applied by unskilful interpreters to the acts of the faithful through the grace of the Spirit, because of some adherent imperfection, and even in public prayer they most absurdly obtrude this upon God. It is far otherwise. The acts of the regenerate, done in faith through the Spirit, are sacrifices well-pleasing to God. How have those who so interpret destroyed the true aspect of Christianity! The utmost humility becomes us before God, and to renounce our own strength is deserving; but the work of God in us ought to receive its own due praise." *Birks*.

A Chinese convert once said: "How can a man trust in his own righteousness? It is like seeking shelter in his own shadow; we may stoop to the very ground, and the lower we bend we still find that our shadow is beneath us. But if a man flee to the shadow of a great rock or a wide-spreading tree, he will find shelter from the noonday sun. That rock, that tree is Christ." *Medhurst*.

Thou canst never pay God, nor discharge the least of thy debts forever. Thou canst not possibly do it by any duties or services in this life; for whatsoever thou dost is either required or not required. If it be not required, it will be so far from being a satisfaction for thy sins that it will be an addition to them, and a piece of will-worship, which will meet with that sad greeting at the last day, "Who hath required these things at your hands?" If it be required, it is no more than thou owest to God before, and if thou hadst never sinned wert obliged to pay it. *Bp. Hopkins*, 1690.—His special work, the work of redemption and sanctification of our race through the Son of His love, presupposes nothing less than that humanity in itself must be considered as hopelessly lost; and whoever, therefore, thinks that his own virtue can wholly or partially save him, declares, in other words, God's work to be superfluous. "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ

is dead in vain" (Gal. 2:21). Thus we become on all sides not merely disposed, but constrained, to set our seal to the humbling declaration of Paul; and nowhere can we find an outlet save in the direction of Golgotha. How mournfully foolish, then, the pride which exalts itself on account of its own works and merits. *Van O*.

Fade as a leaf. The human race is a tree of life, rooting itself far back in the life of God. We are all leaves of this tree of life, and "we all do fade as a leaf." The race remains like the tree, the generations die like leaves. The earth is one mighty sepulchre. The city and the cemetery, the village and the graveyard, grow populous together. . . . Leaves fade because it is the nature and law of their being to fade. It is their true destiny to give place to other generations, to fall and render back their substance to the soil for the enriching of the tree. The leaf, having served the tree in its life, serves it with all it has to bestow in its death; and this reveals the real purpose and value of its existence. This also is the law of human life. God has given us our individual existence that we may add something to the welfare and progress of the human race; and our only real right to life is derived from the fact that we are of some use, that our life really does add something to the welfare of the world. Only by a life devoted to the good of the world can our personal welfare be attained. A leaf that does not serve the tree, as leaves were made to do, the tree will not nourish, the rains will not refresh, the sun will wither and destroy. So God has made our real welfare and value dependent upon that spirit and life by which we may be most useful to others. . . . The leaf dies an honorable death. It has served a great and good purpose in its life, and its monument is the strong and majestic tree, whose branches spread themselves over its grave like priestly hands extended in benediction. It has left behind an increase of vitality and strength to the tree. The color of death in the leaf is the color of sunset, all red and golden, and it is hard to tell whether the tree is more beautiful in the greenness of its life or in the gold and crimson of its dying leaves. A selfish, sinful life leads to a death uncolored with pleasant memories and glorified hopes. Only the Christian fades as the leaf, leaving good behind to all with whom he has lived, and dying naturally, gently, happily, in the glorious light of hope. *W. R. Brooks*.

The fading leaf is not the symbol of death, but of life at its heights of power and fulness

of promise. The coloring of autumn leaves is of the same nature as the coloring of fruit. In the latter it indicates the perfection of the seeds. It is the work of perfection. All noble vitality is rich in tone—not raw, but ripe. No relation is more intimate and Divine than that which exists between the beauty of holiness and the holiness of beauty, and this is best exemplified by the leaf fading at the culminating moment, when the brightest tints and richest coloring express the ripest life. In the wide-lying golden splendor of the autumn days old age itself seems a benediction. How inspiring and beautiful is a Christian old age! Before its wonderful state of ripeness, out of which at any moment the flower of immortality may break, we linger with loving reverence. They come to their last hour like the leaf, like the mellow fruit which gather into themselves the entire life of the tree, all the dew and the sunshine of summer, and giving up to heaven the priceless wealth of hues, thence derived, at last bend and then break the branch from which they hang. So it is not death that makes it fade, but excess of life; life pressing up from a lower to a higher plane. It is the passing shadow between faith and sight, hope and fruition, transient and transparent as the last filmy, fleecy cloud that veils for a moment the full splendors of the sunrise. *G. W. Miller.*

7. "There is none that stirs up himself to take hold of God." To pray is to "take hold of God," by faith to take hold of the promises and the declarations God has made of His good will to us, and to plead them with Him; to take hold of Him as of one who is about to depart from us, earnestly begging of Him not to leave us; or of one that is departed, soliciting his return; to take hold of Him as he that wrestles takes hold of him he wrestles with; for the seed of Jacob wrestle with Him, and so prevail. But when we "take hold on God," it is as the boatman with his hook takes hold on the shore, as if he would pull the shore to him, but really it is to pull himself to the shore; so we pray, not to bring God to our mind, but to bring ourselves to His. Those that would take hold of God in prayer, so as to prevail with Him, must stir up themselves to do it; all that is within us must be employed in the duty (and all little enough), our thoughts fixed and our affections flaming. In order hereunto, all that is within us must be engaged and summoned into the service. *H.*

8. Instead of relying upon any supposed merits of their own, they appeal to their very dependence upon God as a reason why He

should have mercy on them. *A.*—Here, as in chap. 63: 16, "Our Father" looks rather to His spiritual than to His physical creatorship, recognizing God not so much as the Author of our physical being as the Saviour of our souls from sin by His regenerating grace and by His spiritual power generally. That we are as clay and the Lord God our potter, illustrates in figure the same great truth, God's effective and indispensable agency in every conversion and in all the spiritual life that ever exists in fallen human souls. Elsewhere—*e.g.*, Isa. 29: 16 and 45: 9, this figure of the potter and his clay is used to set forth the perverseness of human guilt and folly in denying God's creatorship and man's consequent moral responsibility to his Maker; while in Jer. 18: 6 and Rom. 9: 20, 21, the same figure illustrates a like spirit in man toward God contemplated as the providential Ruler and Disposer of the destinies of nations. In the passage before us, the special point is, God working in man morally and spiritually toward and unto his regeneration and salvation. These precious relations of spiritual children are used here as a ground of plea with God for sustaining mercy. *H. C.*

Though Thou hast corrected us, yet Thou hast not cast us off; foolish and careless as we are, poor and despised, and trampled upon as we are by our enemies, yet still "Thou art our Father;" to Thee therefore we return in our repentance, as the prodigal arose and came to his father; to Thee we apply ourselves by prayer; from whom should we expect relief and succor but from our Father? It is the wrath of a Father that we are under, who will be reconciled, and not "keep His anger forever." *H.*—How will God perform the part of a Father? In allowing us full leave to come to Him in all our necessities (Gal. 4: 6). In supplying all our wants (Matt. 6: 26). In pitying our miseries (Ps. 103: 13). In disciplining and treating us with much indulgence, and wisdom, and care (Heb. 12: 10). In providing able guardians for us (Heb. 1: 14). In laying up an inheritance for us (Luke 12: 32). *T. Manton.*

9. This is the application of the argument presented in the foregoing verse, the actual prayer founded on the fact there stated. *A.*—"Neither remember iniquity forever against us." They do not expressly pray for the removal of the judgment they were under; as to that they refer themselves to God. They pray that God would be reconciled to them, and then they can be easy whether the affliction be continued or removed: "Be not wroth to ex-

tremity, but let Thine anger be mitigated by the clemency and compassion of a Father." They pray that they may not be dealt with according to the desert of their sin; "Neither remember iniquity forever." Such is the evil of sin, that it deserves to be remembered forever; and this is that which they deprecate, that consequence of sin, which is forever. H.

12. *Wilt Thou for these (things) restrain Thyself, oh Jehovah, wilt Thou keep silence and afflict us to extremity?* This is simply another application of the argument by way of an importunate appeal to the Divine compassions. Self-restraint and silence, as applied to God, are common figures for inaction and apparent indifference to the interests and especially the sufferings of His people. The question is not whether God will remain silent in spite of what His people suffered, but whether the loss of their external advantages will induce Him to forsake them. The question, as in many other cases, implies a negation of the strongest kind. The destruction of the old theocracy was God's

own act, and was designed to bring the Church under a new and far more glorious dispensation. How the loss of a national organization and pre-eminence was to be made good is fully stated in the following chapter. A.

Thus closes this chapter of great tenderness and beauty. It is a model of affectionate and earnest entreaty for the Divine interposition in the day of calamity. With such tender and affectionate earnestness may we learn to plead with God! Thus may all His people learn to approach Him as a Father; thus feel that they have the inestimable *privilege* in the times of trial of making known their wants to the High and Holy One. Thus when calamity presses on us; when as individuals or as families we are afflicted; or when our country or the Church is suffering under long trials, may we go to God and humbly confess our sins, and urge His promises, and take hold of His strength, and plead with Him to interpose. Thus pleading, He will hear us; thus presenting our cause, He will interpose to save us. *Barnes.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LXV.

- 65:1** I AM inquired of by them that asked not *for me*; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts; a people that provoketh me to my face continually, 4 sacrificing in gardens, and burning incense upon bricks; which sit among the graves, and lodge in the secret places; which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou: these 6 are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day. Behold, it is written before me: I 7 will not keep silence, but will recompense, yea, I will recompense into their bosom, your own iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the LORD, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I first measure their work into their bosom.
- 8 Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all.
- 9 And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: 10 and my chosen shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down in, for my people that 11 have sought me. But ye that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare 12 a table for Fortune, and that fill up mingled wine unto Destiny; I will destine you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but ye did that which was evil in mine eyes, and chose that wherein I delighted not.
- 13 Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, 14 but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for

15 sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen, and the Lord God shall slay thee; and he shall call his servants by another name: so that he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former 16 troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes. For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into 17 mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. 18 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old, and the sinner being an hundred years old shall 19 be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people, and my 20 chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for calamity; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with 21 them. And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat 22 straw like the ox: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

Chap. 65. The great enigma of Israel's simultaneous loss and gain is solved by a prediction of the calling of the Gentiles (verse 1). This is connected with the obstinate unfaithfulness of the chosen people (verse 2). They are represented under the two main aspects of their character at different periods, as gross idolaters and as pharisaical bigots (verses 3-5). Their casting off was not occasioned by the sins of one generation, but of many (verses 6, 7). But even in this rejected race there was a chosen remnant, in whom the promises shall be fulfilled (verses 8-10). He then reverts to the idolatrous Jews, and threatens them with condign punishment (verses 11, 12). The fate of the unbelieving carnal Israel is compared with that of the true spiritual Israel (verses 13-16). The Gospel economy is described as a new creation (verse 17). Its blessings are described under glowing figures borrowed from the old dispensation (verses 18, 19). Premature death shall be no longer known (verse 20). Possession and enjoyment shall no longer be precarious (verses 21-23). Their very desires shall be anticipated (verse 24). All animosities and noxious influences shall cease forever (verse 25). A.

1-7. The apostle Paul (an expositor we may depend upon) has given us the true sense of these verses, and told us what was the event they pointed at and were fulfilled in—viz., the calling in of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews by the preaching of the Gospel. And he observes, that herein "Esaias is very bold," not only in foretelling a thing so im-

probable ever to be brought about, but in foretelling it to the Jews, who would take it as a gross affront to their nation, and therein Moses' words would be made good (De. 32:21), "I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people." H.

1. An obvious and natural application may be made to the Gentiles generally, whose vocation is repeatedly predicted in this book, and might be here used with powerful effect in proof that the rejection of the Jews was the result of their own obstinate perverseness, not of God's unfaithfulness or want of power. This is precisely Paul's interpretation of the passage in Rom. 10:20, 21, where he does not, as in many other cases, merely borrow the expressions of the prophet, but formally interprets them, applying this verse to the Gentiles and then adding, "but to Israel (or of Israel) he saith" what follows in the next verse. The same intention to expound the prophet's language is clear from the apostle's mention of Isaiah's boldness in thus shocking the most cherished prepossessions of the Jews. A.

Paul quotes both this verse and the next (Rom. 10:20, 21) as predicting the conversion of the Gentiles and the long-suffering patience of God toward the unbelieving Jews. Since the reference of this verse to the Gentiles at the opening of the Christian age admits of no doubt, it becomes a *landmark* to guide in the interpretation of the whole chapter, and indeed of the previous context also. This fact precludes the theory which applies this portion of Isaiah to the exile at Babylon and the restora-

tion from it; and also that theory which applies these chapters to some supposed restoration of the Jews yet future. H. C.

2. Spreading out the hands is the gesture of earnest exhortation, and "all the day" refers to the long series of prophetic warnings, crowned by the voice of the Lord and His apostles. *Birks.*—In the later prophets, and especially in Jeremiah, great stress is laid upon the reiterated and long-protracted efforts of the Lord to reclaim His sinning people. (See Jer. 7: 24-28; 25: 3-7; 26: 5; 29: 17-19 and 44: 4, 5.) Such persistent entreaty may well be expressed by stretching out the hand imploringly all the day. The "thoughts" which they walked after were their plans and devices, their chosen courses of sin.

3. Provoking God to *His face* seems to mean, with daring and reckless impiety, insulting Him in His very presence. It is remarkable that precisely the same Hebrew words appear in the first of the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt have no other gods *before My face*;" in My presence; brought up before Me to insult Me to My very face. The people here spoken of were flagrantly violating this first command. H. C.

5. The great end which the prophet had in view was to describe the unbelieving Jews as abominable in the sight of God. His manner of expressing this idea is poetical, by means of figures drawn from various periods of their history, without intending to exhibit either of these periods exclusively. To a Hebrew writer what could be more natural than to express the idea of religious corruption by describing its subjects as idolaters, diviners, eaters of swine's flesh, worshippers of outward forms and self-righteous hypocrites. Of such the text declares God's abhorrence. Smoke and fire may be taken as natural concomitants and parallel figures, as if He had said, against whom My wrath smokes and burns continually. A.

6, 7. The language here indicates that the national guilt of several successive generations was at length visited upon one. "I will recompense into *their bosom*" (*i.e.*, the last and the doomed one of the series) "your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together"—the latter phrase, "your fathers," probably including more than one generation. This accords precisely with the view given of this very case by our Divine Lord (Matt. 23: 32, 35, 36), "Fill ye up the measure of your fathers" (*i.e.*, the measure of their guilt), "that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto

the blood of Zacharias whom ye slew between the Temple and the altar; verily, I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." Thus the "former works" of that guilty nation were measured back into the bosom of the one most guilty generation, last in the series. H. C.

8-10. This is expounded by Paul (Rom. 11: 1-5), where when, upon occasion of the rejection of the Jews, it is asked, "Hath God then cast away His people?" He answers, No; for "at this time there is a remnant according to the election of grace." This prophecy has reference to that distinguished remnant. When that hypocritical nation is to be destroyed, God will separate and secure to Himself some from among them; some of the Jews shall be brought to embrace the Christian faith, shall be added to the Church, and so be saved. And our Saviour has told us, that "for the sake of these elect" the days of the destruction of the Jews should be shortened, and a stop put to the desolation, which otherwise would have proceeded to that degree that "no flesh should be saved" (Matt. 24: 22).

8. When a vine is so blasted and withered that there seems to be no sap or life in it, and therefore the dresser of the vineyard is inclined to pluck it up or cut it down, yet if ever so little of the juice of the grape, fit to make new wine, be found, though but in one cluster, a stander-by interposes and says, "Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it;" there is life in the root and hope that yet it may become good for something. Good men are blessings to the places where they live; and sometimes God spares whole cities and nations for the sake of a few such in them. H.

As when one cluster, well ripened, juicy and good for wine, appears among many bad, and one says, Do not destroy that, for a blessing is in it; so God will spare the little remnant of faithful ones, and not make an utter destruction of the Jewish nation. In precise fulfilment of this prediction, the little band of Jewish disciples, warned by their Divine Master (Matt. 24: 15, 16), escaped to the mountains beyond the Jordan, and fell not with the fated city. In general it may be said, all the Jews who turned to God were saved; the rest perished in vast numbers.

9, 10. This passage most clearly refers to the great events that clustered about the change from the Mosaic to the Christian dispensation, the extreme guilt of the Jewish nation as a whole and their destruction, coupled with the salvation of the penitent and believing portion

—the last point being the subject of remark here. Then furthermore, it is entirely legitimate and fully sustained by prophetic usage to explain these verses as the common Jewish costume by which the prophets speak in figures drawn from their own people and times. H. C.

10. A repetition of the promise in the foregoing verse, rendered more specific by the mention of one kind of prosperity—viz., that connected with the raising of cattle, and of certain places where it should be specially enjoyed—viz., the valley of Achor and the plain of Sharon. Two reasons have been given for the mention of these places, one derived from their position, the other from their quality. As the valley of Achor was near Jericho and Jordan, and the plain of Sharon on the Mediterranean, between Joppa and Cesarea, some suppose that they are here combined to signify the whole breadth of the land, from east to west. And as Sharon was proverbial for its verdure and fertility (see above, chaps. 33 : 9 ; 35 : 2), it is inferred by some that Achor was so likewise, which they think is the more probable because Hosea says that the valley of Achor shall be a door of hope (Hos. 2 : 17). For these or other reasons Sharon and Achor are here mentioned, in Isaiah's characteristic manner, as samples of the whole land, or its pastures, just as flocks and herds are used as images of industry and wealth, derived from the habits of the patriarchal age. A.

11-16. Here the different states of the godly and wicked, of the Jews that believed, and of those that still persisted in unbelief, are set the one over against the other, as life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse. H.

11. This is only a description of the object of address ; the address itself is contained in the next verse. There is perfect unanimity upon the only point of exegetical importance—viz., that the passage is descriptive of idolatrous worship ; for even those who apply it directly to convivial indulgences connect the latter with religious institutions. This being settled, the details still doubtful can be interesting only to the philologist and antiquarian. A.

12. The great sin, represented under the conception of idolatry, seems to be brought out in literal phrase in the last clause of verse 12, "When I called, ye did not answer ; when I spake, ye did not hear." No calls from God availed toward reclaiming them to Himself. Their depravity baffled every moral endeavor to save them. H. C.

13, 14. These verses merely carry out the

general threatening of the one preceding, in a series of poetical antitheses, where hunger, thirst, disgrace and anguish take the place of sword and slaughter, and determine these to be emblematic terms. The passage is a solemn prediction of happiness to the believing and of misery to the unbelieving Jews. The latter are directly addressed, the former designated as *My servants*. A.—Still addressing the ungodly portion of the Jews and speaking of the pious portion as His servants and His chosen, the Lord draws the contrast between them. Most remarkably was this fulfilled when the day of retribution came upon the guilty nation, and the Roman arms, coupled with their own mad infatuation, made Jerusalem a city of horrors. Never were greater calamities poured forth on any doomed city. But precisely then there was great joy in those communities where the Gospel was shedding forth its blessings and men were turning to the Lord. H. C.

God's servants shall want nothing that is good for them. Heaven's happiness will be to them an everlasting feast ; they shall be filled with that which now they hunger and thirst after. But those who set their hearts upon the world, and place their happiness in that, shall be hungry and thirsty, always empty, always craving ; for it is not bread, it surfeits but it satisfies not. In communion with God, and dependence upon Him, there is full satisfaction, but in sinful pursuits there is nothing but disappointment. God's servants shall rejoice and sing for joy of heart ; they have constant cause for joy, and there is nothing that may be an occasion of grief to them but they have an allay sufficient for it. As far as faith is in act and exercise they have a heart to rejoice, and their joy is their strength. They shall rejoice in their hope, because it shall not make them ashamed. Heaven will be a world of everlasting joy to all that are now sowing in tears. H.

13. How many Beholds are here ! Every Behold is not only a call to the careless to consider, but also a declaration from heaven that thus it shall be at last with all impenitent sinners. That is, when others sing in heaven, they shall sorrow and howl in hell ! Wherefore let me advise that you be not afraid of, but rather covet a broken heart and contrite spirit. I say, covet it now, now the white flag is hung out, now the golden sceptre of grace is held forth to you. And take this notice, that this is not the *first* time that I have given you this advice. *Bunyan*.

15. According to the usage of the prophecies,

the promise of another name imports a different character and state, and in this sense the promise has been fully verified. But in addition to this general fulfilment, which no one calls in question, it is matter of history that the Jewish commonwealth or nation is destroyed; that the name of Jew has been for centuries a by-word and a formula of execration, and that they who have succeeded to the spiritual honors of this once favored race, although they claim historical identity therewith, have never borne its name, but another, which from its very nature could have no existence until Christ had come, and which in the common parlance of the Christian world is treated as the opposite of Jew. Now all this must be set aside as mere fortuitous coincidence, or it must be accounted for precisely in the same way that we all account for similar coincidences between the history of Christ and the Old Testament in minor points, where all admit that the direct sense of the prophecy is more extensive. A.—The children of the covenant shall no longer be called Jews, but Christians; and to them, under that name, all the promises and privileges of the new covenant shall be secured. This other name shall be an honorable name; it shall not be confined to one nation, but with it men shall “bless themselves in the earth,” all the world over. God shall have servants out of all nations, that shall all be dignified with this new name. H.

16. This verse is doubly important because of its close logical relation to the verse that follows and to its peculiarly interesting statements. The reader will therefore take special note that verses 15, 16 bring us into the very centre and heart of the Christian system, Christ giving His name to His people to wear (“Christian”), and then His own name also to offer prayer in and to bless themselves by; and further, this name is said to be identical, at least in significancy, with that of the “God of truth.” Then the special point in which Christ proves Himself true is the certainty of pardon to the penitent. He is surely a God of truth because He has fully put away all the former sins of His people, and has hidden them forever from His eye. Now comparing this Gospel system with the distinctive features of the Mosaic, and much more still, with the historic life of the Jewish nation (viewed morally), the contrast is very great. It opens to view a new spiritual world. This is precisely what the Lord through His prophet proceeds to say.

17. “For, behold,” I make a wondrous change. I contemplate nothing less, I do

nothing less than what might be called, building a new world. The words, “for, behold,” resume and restate the main facts of the previous verse in a more broad and general form, and call special attention. The next verse is God’s own explanation of what He means by creating new heavens and earth. The last clause in verse 17 affirms that the new will so entirely eclipse and supersede the old as to expel it from thought and memory. H. C.—The verse is a promise or prediction of entire change in the existing state of things, the precise nature of the change and of the means by which it shall be brought about forming no part of the revelation here. That the words are not inapplicable to a revolution of a moral and spiritual nature, we may learn from Paul’s analogous description of the change wrought in conversion (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15), and from Peter’s application of this very passage. Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet. 3:13). That the words have such a meaning even here is rendered probable by the last clause, the oblivion of the former state of things being much more naturally connected with moral and spiritual changes than with one of a material nature. A.

The establishment of the Christian Church and religion is what is more obviously and primarily pointed at in the expression, “new heavens and new earth;” and it is only to their more hidden and fullest meaning that Peter (referring to this and other passages of Isaiah) applies them as above. This creation of new heavens and earth began at the time when the Gospel of Christ began its progress; is to be completed at that other time, when it shall please God (the Creator) to render it perfect, in the consummation of all things. The beginning and end are here blended together. *Vitranga.*

18, 19. The spiritual sense of the new heavens and earth is supported not only by verses 15, 16, but by the scope of the whole chapter, which unquestionably treats of the great moral and spiritual changes attendant upon the first advent of the Messiah—viz., the calling of the Gentiles; the conversion to Christ of a remnant of the Jews and the utter apostasy and ruin of the remaining masses, coupled with the glories of the new Zion as a world of spiritual life, light and joy. We may go back yet farther and maintain that the one great central theme throughout these later prophecies of Isaiah (chaps. 40–66) is essentially the same; those

great events and truths which cluster round the transition from the Mosaic to the Christian economy, involving a prophetic outlook onward upon the grand comprehensive results of the latter period. Hence in harmony with this great purpose and drift of these later prophecies, these declarations, "I am creating new heavens and a new earth," should certainly be construed to refer to this same stupendous spiritual and moral change and not to any supposed material change to take place after the close of the Gospel age and of the present earthly state. Still further, precisely this figure of new heavens and earth to represent the new features of the Christian age has occurred already in this portion of Isaiah (chap. 51 : 16). Giving to His people new revelations of His truth and new demonstrations of His spiritual protection are legitimate preliminary agencies for introducing the Christian dispensation, but can have no possible relevance as preliminary agencies for building a new material universe. Giving His people truth to preach, and bidding them go out into all the world and preach it, saying to them, "Lo, I am with you alway to the end of the world," were in fact precisely the Christian agencies with which Jesus Christ inaugurated His Gospel kingdom. Hence we must identify the new heavens and new earth with the Gospel dispensation. With this view accords the language of Paul (2 Cor. 5 : 17), "If any man be in Christ, there is a *new creation* (Greek); old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." Here essentially the same figure, a new creation, is applied to the spiritual change wrought in every individual conversion which Isaiah applies to the new forms of spiritual power in which the Gospel age pre-eminently surpasses the Mosaic. H. C.

18. *But be ye glad and rejoice forever.* It is not to be momentary happiness, like a bright morning soon overcast with clouds. It is to be perpetual, everlasting. The joy of God's people is to endure forever; and they shall have ceaseless cause of praise and thanksgiving. *I create Jerusalem a rejoicing. A source of rejoicing, or a place of rejoicing. And her people a joy.* In themselves joyful, a source of joy to all others. The idea is, that the Church would be a place of the highest happiness; and that they who were redeemed should have occasion of perpetual joy. Religion is not gloom; and they who are redeemed are not redeemed to be sad. *Barnes.*

19. There is an implication of Divine authority in the promise that weeping shall no more be heard in her. There is something very

beautiful in the association of ideas here expressed. God shall rejoice in His people, and they shall rejoice with Him. They shall no longer know what grief is, because He shall cease to grieve over them; their former distresses shall be forgotten by them and forever hidden from His eyes.

20. The most natural meaning is the one preferred by most modern writers. Premature death, and even death in a moderate old age, shall be unknown; he who dies a hundred years old shall be considered either as dying in childhood or as cut off by a special malediction. The whole is a highly poetical description of longevity, to be explained precisely like the promise of new heavens and a new earth in verse 17.

21, 22. This is a promise of security and permanent enjoyment, clothed in expressions drawn from the promises and threatenings of the Mosaic law. By the age of a tree is generally understood the great age which some species are said to attain, such as the oak, the banyan, etc. The essential idea is that of permanent continuance, and the figures here used to express it make it still more probable that in the whole foregoing context the predictions are to be figuratively understood. A.

23. "They are themselves the seed of the blessed of the Lord," and there is a blessing entailed upon them by descent from their ancestors, which their offspring with them shall partake of, and shall be, as well as they, "the seed of the blessed of the Lord." God will make their children that rise up comforts to them; they shall have the joy of "seeing them walk in the truth." He will make the times that come after comfortable to their children; as they shall be good, so it shall be well with them. H.—**Their offspring with them.** The children of believing parents stand, by virtue of that fact, in a special relation to God. God is the God of families, as well as of individuals. He clothes parents with their authority; He requires families to worship Him; He has made special promises to families which believe and obey Him, and "pours out His fury upon the families which call not on His name." These promises, coupled with these conditions, are of the nature of a covenant, so that we can properly say that Christian families, as such, are in covenant with God. *T. P. Stevenson.*

After an experience of more than forty years in contact with saints and sinners of almost all conceivable grades and classes, and with the home life of cultured and illiterate alike, we

have come to the settled conviction that there is no sustained and fervent piety to be found *prevailing* in homes destitute of family worship; and that parents who fail to provide for their young the legacy of holy influence and pungent memory generated at the family altar rob their children of blessing and send them out into the world impoverished beyond all power of recompense, even though in all other respects the parental example and influence be of the loftiest and purest type. The family altar is an ordinance of God, essential to Christian thrift, and neglect of it invariably works irreparable and deplorable mischief. *W. W. Faris.*

Let every father so deport himself toward his children, winning their respect, their reverence and their loving obedience, that as they grow to an appreciation of the Divine Being, the sweetest of His names to them, the one conveying to them the fullest meaning of all that is pure and good and true shall be—Father. *Interior.*

24. A more precise translation of this verse is, "And it shall be that they shall not yet have called, and I will answer; they shall be yet speaking, and I will hear." The passage is designed to put in strong form God's infinite readiness to hear prayer, and the peculiarly intimate and endearing relations existing between Himself and His praying people. They have only to make their wants known; while they are yet speaking He hears and the thing is done. *H. C.*—A strong expression of God's readiness to hear and answer prayer, not a mere promise that it shall be heard (like that in *Jer. 29:12*; *Zech. 13:9*), but an assurance that it shall be granted before it is heard. The nearest parallel is *Matt. 6:8*, where our Lord Himself says, Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him. (Cf. *chaps. 30:19*; *58:9*; *Ps. 145:18, 19.*) *A.*—When His people shall come to live very near to Him and to walk softly before Him, on terms of true Christian intimacy and in the warmth of sanctified affection, prayer will be with them as their breath, and God's answer will be the quick response of a loving Father's heart. *H. C.*

Before they call I will answer. Their desires shall be anticipated. God will see their wants, and will impart to them the blessings which they need. He will not wait to be applied to for the blessing. How many such blessings do all His people receive at the hand of God! How ready is He to anticipate our wants! How watchful is He of our necessities; and how

rich His benevolence in providing for us! Even the most faithful and prayerful of His people receive numerous favors and comforts at His hand for which they have not directly asked Him. The prayer for the supply of our daily food, "Give us this day our daily bread," God had anticipated, and had prepared the means of answering it long before in the abundant harvest. Had He waited until the prayer was offered, it could not have been answered without a miracle. Ever watchful, He anticipates our necessities, and in His providence and grace lays the foundation for granting favors long before we ask Him. *Barnes.*

Why ask, if God has promised? Asking shows faith. Asking is the acceptance on our part of what God offers. Ask and ye shall receive; ask not and ye shall not receive. Find a promise for what you want, and then bring it boldly to God. If you have no plain promise, ask humbly, submissively and modestly, leaving altogether to His wise love the things about which you are uncertain. *J. R. M.*

Let none of you hold His prayer cheap; He to whom we pray holdeth it not cheap. Ere it is gone forth out of our mouth, He has it written in His book. One of two things we may without doubt hope, that He will either give us what we ask, or what He knoweth to be more useful to us. For we know not what to ask for as we ought, but He hath pity on our ignorance. He graciously receiveth prayer, but He giveth not either what is not altogether good for us, or what need not be given us yet. But the prayer will not be without fruit. *Bernard.*

The abounding promise is true absolutely in the spiritual realm, where fuller knowledge of God, a more Christ-like character and more blessed communion with Him, wait for all who desire them and seek them in God's way. The keys of that treasure-house are put into our hands, and we may take as much as we will; and the wider we open our desires, the larger will be the gifts which He pours into our laps. "Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss," not joining effort and perseverance with prayer. *A. M.*

25. The promise of a happy change is wound up in the most appropriate manner by repeating the earlier prophecy in *chap. 11:6-9*, that all hurtful influences shall forever cease in the holy hill or Church of God. *A.*—Thus the whole book is knit together by many secret links, and reveals, from first to last, the unity of design which marks the whole. *Birks.*

ISAIAH, CHAPTER LXVI.

66:1 Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool : what manner of house will ye build unto me ? and what place shall be my rest ? For all these things hath mine hand made, and so all these things came to be, saith the LORD : but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word. He that killeth an ox is as he that slayeth a man ; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as he that breaketh a dog's neck ; he that offereth an oblation, as he that offereth swine's blood ; he that burneth frankincense, as he that blesseth an idol : yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations ; I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them ; because when I called, none did answer ; when I spake, they did not hear : but they did that which was evil in mine eyes, and chose that wherein I delighted not.

Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word : Your brethren that hate you, that cast you out for my name's sake, have said, Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy ; but they shall be ashamed. A voice of tumult from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompence to his enemies. Before she travailed, she brought forth ; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing ? who hath seen such things ? Shall a land be born in one day ? shall a nation be brought forth at once ? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth ? saith the LORD : shall I that cause to bring forth shut the womb ? saith thy God.

Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all ye that love her : rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn over her : that ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations ; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream, and ye shall suck thereof ; ye shall be borne upon the side, and shall be dandled upon the knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you ; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And ye shall see it, and your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like the tender grass : and the hand of the LORD shall be known toward his servants, and he will have indignation against his enemies. For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and his chariots shall be like the whirlwind ; to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire will the LORD plead, and by his sword, with all flesh : and the slain of the LORD shall be many. They that sanctify themselves and purify themselves to go unto the gardens, behind one in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse ; they shall come to an end together, saith the LORD. For I know their works and their thoughts : the time cometh, that I will gather all nations and tongues ; and they shall come, and shall see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send such as escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory ; and they shall declare my glory among the nations. And they shall bring all your brethren out of all the nations for an offering unto the LORD, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring their offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. And of them also will I take for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me : for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched ; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

Chap. 66. This chapter winds up the prophetic discourse with an express prediction of the change of dispensations, and a description of the difference between them. Jehovah will no longer dwell in temples made with hands (verse 1). Every sincere and humble heart

shall be His residence (verse 2). The ancient sacrifices, though divinely instituted, will henceforth be as hateful as the rites of idolatry (verse 3). They who still cling to the abrogated ritual will be fearfully but righteously requited (verse 4). The true Israel cast out by these deluded sinners shall ere long be glorified, and the carnal Israel fearfully rewarded (verses 5, 6). The ancient Zion may already be seen travelling with a new and glorious dispensation (verses 7-9). They who mourned for her seeming desolation now rejoice in her abundance and her honor (verses 10-14). At the same time the carnal Israel shall be destroyed, as apostates and idolaters (verses 14-17). The place which they once occupied shall now be filled by the elect from all nations (verse 18). To gather these, a remnant of the ancient Israel shall go forth among the Gentiles (verse 19). They shall come from every quarter and by every method of conveyance (verse 20). They shall be admitted to the sacerdotal honors of the chosen people (verse 21). This new dispensation is not to be temporary, like the one before it, but shall last forever (verse 22). While the spiritual Israel is thus replenished from all nations, the apostate Israel shall perish by a lingering decay (verses 23, 24). A.

As to its course of thought, this concluding chapter is remarkably in harmony with the general scope of the later prophecies (chaps. 40-66), and especially so with the portion (chaps. 49-65), all its topics clustering round the transition point from the Mosaic to the Christian dispensation as their natural centre. Here is the temple made with hands, giving place to the spiritual temple—every living Christian's heart (verses 1, 2); ritual sacrifices no longer required, but henceforth abominable (verse 3); retribution upon men who choose their own ways of worship and of life, and not God's (verses 3, 4); the believing and humble remnant of the ancient people, scorned and outcast by their brethren, but beloved of God (verse 5); retribution upon their enemies (verse 6). The true Zion, almost without travail pains, gives birth to the Gospel Church and the new glories of Christ's kingdom (verses 7-9); in which all Zion's true friends may well rejoice exceedingly, for her consolations in the accession of the Gentiles will be great and enduring (verses 10-14). The Lord's hand uplifted to bless Zion reveals itself also in judgment on her foes (verses 15-17). Again the prophet recurs to the spread of the Gospel far abroad and to the new constitution of the Gospel king-

dom (verses 18-23), but closes (verse 24) with the hopeless doom of God's persistent enemies. H. C.

1. Thus saith the Lord. The same weighty preface is used once more, as in 65 : 8, 13, and still earlier (43 : 14, 16 ; 44 : 6, 24 ; 45 : 1, 11, 14 ; 48 : 17 ; 49 : 7, 8, 22 ; 50 : 1 ; 56 : 1), to introduce this crown and topstone of the whole. The prophecy began (1 : 10-15) by denouncing the sin of formal worship, with especial reference to the time of Ahaz. And here a similar warning and reproof is repeated at the very close. Through all the intervening centuries this has been the one grand snare and temptation of the Jewish people. *Birks.*

The question asks not so much for its locality as for its quality. *What* house, what temple worthy of My infinite greatness and glory, can ye ever build for Me? The original justifies this sense and the scope of thought in the passage requires it. All critics agree that the language disapproves the work of building a temple for the great God. This is the natural import of the question, and is confirmed by the context in which God first declares that instead of dwelling any more in earthly temples, He dwells with the humble, contrite heart (verse 2), and in which (verse 3) He expresses His abhorrence henceforth of animal sacrifices, without which there would be no earthly temple. It is remarkable that the prophetic eye, resting upon the covenant people at the era of Messiah's advent and earthly life, saw them rebuilding His earthly temple. It was the great religious enterprise of that age. At the date when our Lord entered upon His public ministry, it had been forty-six years in building (John 2 : 19, 20). H. C.

It may be asked why this truth did not forbid the erection of the Temple at first, as well as its gorgeous reconstruction in the time of Christ. The answer is, that it was necessary for a temporary purpose, but when this temporary purpose was accomplished it became not only useless, but unlawful. Henceforth the worship was to be a spiritual worship, the Church universally diffused, and the material sanctuary no longer an earthly residence for God, but a convenient place of meeting for His people. A.

2. Understanding by "all those things" the heavens and the earth—i.e., the created universe, the Lord in this verse declares, My hand made them all, and so, consequently, *they came into being*. They all owe their existence wholly and exclusively to My creative hand. In the sublime language of the Psalmist, "By the

word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. For He spake, and it was; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33 : 6, 9). Yet though I have built this beautiful earth, and those more grandly magnificent heavens, and though no earthly temple, however vast in its proportions and however gorgeous in its adornments, is worthy to be My abode; yet to this man will I look with special regard, even to him who is truly humble, contrite of heart for sin, solicitous to know My word and do My will. H. C.

3. Each ceremonial sacrifice is here identified with some kindred act, most impure and hateful under the Levitical law. (Cf. Ex. 13 : 13.) The sin of their formalism is shown to be increased by the eager zeal with which they pursued these self-righteous and unprofitable services. *Birks.*

The text discloses the general doctrine that sacrifice is hateful in the sight of God if offered in a wicked spirit, but with a special reference to those who still adhered to the old sacrifices after the great sacrifice for sin was come and had been offered once for all. Thus understood this verse extends to sacrifices that which the foregoing verses said of the Temple, after the change of dispensations. A.—The form of statement strongly implies the utter discontinuance of the entire sacrificial system. It goes down together with the material temple, both having done their work; each having its inherent liabilities to evil; each therefore is promptly set aside when in the fulness of time the world was ripe for the better dispensation.

4. Their persistent adherence to the Mosaic ritual and their scornful rejection of a spiritual (not carnal) Messiah and of His Gospel, had not been done ignorantly, and without ample light as to God's will, for through long ages God had called them by His prophets and they would not hear. H. C.—God will make their sin their punishment; they shall be hurried into ruin by their own delusions. God will "bring their fears upon them," will bring upon them that which shall be a terror to them, that which they themselves have been afraid of, and thought to escape by sinful shifts. Unbelieving hearts and unpurified, unpacified consciences need no more to make them miserable than to have "their own fears brought" upon them. H.

5. Last clause, read "but it is they that shall be put to shame." *Am. Com.*

These wicked Jews appear now as persecutors of the few out of their nation who had espoused the name of Christ. The latter are ad-

dressed, "Ye that reverence God's word; your brethren [of the Jews] who have hated you" (the New Testament shows how bitterly) "and have cast you out" (of their synagogues and communion) "for My name's sake, have said" (as men who assume to be very religious and to have God on their side in these malignant persecutions); "God will be glorified." They claimed to think that in persecuting the followers of Christ they were doing God service and promoting His glory. This description of the bigoted, persecuting Jews of the early Christian age is wonderfully true to history.

6. The meaning here is that God is heard going forth from His city and Temple to visit fearful retribution on the guilty Jews, His enemies. It can scarcely be doubted that the passage refers specially to the Roman armies, sent of God in His providence to destroy the doomed city and people. H. C.

7-9. A figure for the whole eventful crisis of the change of dispensations, and the consequent change in the condition of the Church. This indestructible ideal person, when she might have seemed to be reduced to nothing by the defection of the natural Israel, is vastly and suddenly augmented by the introduction of the Gentiles, a succession of events which is here most appropriately represented as the birth of a male child without the pains of childbirth. A.—This passage corresponds substantially in thought with chap. 49 : 18-23, saving that Zion there is assumed to be the joyful mother of countless hosts of Gentile children; while here, the whole ingathering of the Gospel age, the entire results of preaching the Gospel to the wide world, are thought of collectively as one male child. Hath the like been ever heard of before—a nation born with one birth-pang? for ere Zion had travailed, she brought forth her children! Yet this is only what should be expected from the glorious God! Would He not most assuredly finish what He had begun, and carry through to a full and sublime success what His own wisdom and love had planned and predicted?

10, 11. Jerusalem is now a happy mother rejoicing that a son is born to her, a birth which really means a nation (verse 8), a new and world-including Zion.

12. Her peace in the sense of spiritual prosperity shall be with the deep and mighty flow of a great *river*, this Hebrew word being used for the largest class of rivers. The "flowing stream" should rather be *overflowing*; one which in its freshets breaks over all its banks. The conversion and ingathering of the Gentiles

will be on no stinted scale, but with mighty sweep and magnificent results. The incoming Gentiles seem here to be incorporated into the Zion family and welcomed to this prolific and rejoicing mother of nations.

13. The Hebrew reads, "As a *man*" (not merely as "one") "whom His mother comforteth;" as if the Divine speaker would honor the idea of a mother comforting her son even in his mature years, and of a son enjoying such comfort none the less for his years of manhood. H. C.—The *in Jerusalem* suggests the only means by which these blessings are to be secured—viz., a union of affection and of interest with the Israel of God, to whom alone they are promised. A.

"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." What a depth is there in that love which God chooses as an image of His own! and yet the love of a mother's heart is but a drop from that illimitable ocean into which our sins, though great as mountains, once cast are lost forever—buried out of sight. I believe that His love as far exceeds a mother's, when it is deepest and strongest, as does the strength of His almighty arm that of the infant which hangs helpless on her breast. *Guthrie*.

"As one whom his mother comforteth, so the Lord comforteth His people." It is in the dark and boisterous night of sorrow or apprehension that the Saviour reveals Himself nigh. And one of the first things He does is to explain the subject-matter of the grief—to show its real nature and amount. "It is but a light affliction. It lasts but for a moment. It is a false alarm. It is only the rain-drift on the window—wait till the day dawns and shadows flee away. Wait till morning, and you will see the whole extent of it." And then the next thing that He does is to teach some useful lesson. And during those quiet hours, when the heart is soft, the Saviour's lessons sink deep. And last of all, besides consolation under the trial and peaceful fruits that follow it, by this comforting visit, the Saviour unspeakably endears Himself to that soul. Paul and Silas never knew Christ so well, nor loved Him so much, as after that night which He and they passed together in the Macedonian prison. And the souls on which the Lord Jesus has taken the deepest hold are those whose great tribulations have thrown them most frequently and most entirely into His own society. *Hamilton*.

We should never see the glorious Divine promises nor realize the precious joys and hopes of Christian faith if the shadow of sorrow never deepened about us. The child never

fully understands the sweetness and gentleness of the mother's love until the child is sick or suffering; and we can never experience the blessedness of being drawn close to God's heart and comforted by Him, "as one whom his mother comforteth," if we do not have pain or grief. So it is a blessed thing to mourn, just to have God comfort us. H. C. T.

14. The last half of the verse puts in vivid contrast the revealings of God's power for salvation to His friends and destruction upon His enemies. "The hand of the Lord made known" for good is a revelation of His power to save. The last clause should be translated, "But He is *indignant* toward His enemies," the original word being a verb and not a noun. At this point the discourse turns to speak of God's indignation against the wicked and its fruits in righteous retribution. H. C.

15-24. These verses, like the pillar of cloud and fire, have a dark side toward the enemies of God's kingdom and all that are rebels against His crown and a bright side toward His faithful loyal subjects. H.

15. The whole verse represents Jehovah, considered in relation to His enemies, as a consuming fire (De. 4:24; Heb. 12:29; cf. 2 Thess. 1:8).

16. A clue to the primary application of the verse is afforded by our Saviour's words in Matt. 24:22, where in speaking of the speedy destruction of Jerusalem He says that excepting the elect no flesh should be saved—i.e., no portion of the Jewish race but those who were ordained to everlasting life through faith in Him. This application of Isaiah's prophecy agrees exactly with the view already taken of the whole preceding context as relating to that great decisive crisis in the history of the Church and of the world, the dissolution of the old economy and the inauguration of the new. According to this view of the passage, what is here said of fire, sword and slaughter was fulfilled not only as a figurative prophecy of general destruction, but in its strictest sense in the terrific carnage which attended the extinction of the Jewish state, and of which, more emphatically than of any other event outwardly resembling it, it might be said that *many were the slain of Jehovah*. A.

17. The class primarily described here must be identical with those who appear in chap. 65:3, 4—i.e., the unbelieving, apostate Jews, whose wickedness is described in terms borrowed from the odious idol worship of the prophet's own time. It will be noticed that these descriptions have in common the follow-

ing leading points—viz., the sacrificing in gardens; the eating of swine's flesh and of things abominable. H. C.

18. As we have seen that the crimes described in the foregoing verses are not those of the heathen, but of the apostate Jews, whose deeds and thoughts must therefore be intended in the first clause, the explanation most in harmony with this immediate context, as well as with the whole drift of the prophecy thus far, is that which makes the verse before us a distinct prediction of the calling of the Gentiles, both to witness the infliction of God's vengeance on the Jews, and to supply their places in His Church or chosen people. It is perhaps to the language of this prophecy that Christ Himself alludes in Matt. 24 : 31. (Cf. also John 5 : 25.)

19. The whole may be paraphrased as follows : Such being their character, I will cast them off and gather the nations to take their place ; for which end I will send forth the survivors of the nation, the elect for whose sake these days shall be shortened when all besides them perish, to declare My glory in the regions where My name has never yet been heard. Thus understood, the passage is exactly descriptive of the preaching of the Gospel at the beginning of the new dispensation. All the first preachers were escaped Jews, plucked as brands from the burning, saved from that perverse generation (Acts 2 : 40). The *sign* will then denote the whole miraculous display of Divine power, in bringing the old dispensation to a close and introducing the new, including the destruction of the unbelieving Jews on the one hand, and on the other all those signs and wonders and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost (Heb. 2 : 4), which Paul calls the signs of an apostle (2 Cor. 12 : 12), and which Christ Himself had promised should follow them that believed (Mark 16 : 17). All these were signs placed among them—*i.e.*, among the Jews, to the greater condemnation of the unbelievers, and to the salvation of such as should be saved. A.

This verse stands distinguished among Hebrew prophecies in that it drops or rather oversteps the usual restraints of the Jewish costume, and speaks of Christian missionary labors in New Testament and Gospel terms. Christ's servants really "*go abroad* into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature !" The nations designated here are named as specimens, and signify the actual extent to which the Gospel should be preached. Tarshish carries the mind to Southwestern Europe ; Pul and Lud to Africa, where Lud is manifestly

located by Jeremiah (46 : 9) ; Tubal to Northern Asia (Ezek. 27 : 13 ; 32 : 26 ; 38 : 2, 3 and 39 : 1). Javan is the Hebrew word for Greece. The "*isles afar off*"—all the distant countries beyond sea. In general, all those who had never before "*heard My fame* ;" a term which probably means here, as in chap. 53 : 1, the Gospel message, even as "*My glory*" refers specially to the manifestations of Divine mercy in the Gospel of salvation. H. C.

20. The survivors sent forth to the nations are described as bringing back the converts to the true religion as an offering to Jehovah. Their return for this purpose is described as easy, swift and even splendid, all the choicest methods of conveyance used in ancient times being here combined to express that idea. A.

The ingathering of Gentile converts is put here naturally in Jewish costume. Under that ancient system, proselytes must needs come up to Jerusalem to worship, and indeed must come there to espouse the name of Jehovah and be formally inducted into the Jewish Church. This prophecy pertains to the Christian age. A prophet, writing for the people of his own times, must use terms intelligible to them. The *spirit* of this prophecy authorizes us to substitute for horses and dromedaries rail-cars and steamships, and also to assume that the transportation will be outward rather than inward ; missionaries *going forth* into all the world, and not the nations themselves *coming in* to some great central Jerusalem. H. C.

21. The most natural interpretation seems to be as follows : The mass of the Jewish people was to be cast off from all connection with the Church ; but the elect who should escape were to be sent among the nations and to bring them for an offering to Jehovah, as the priests and Levites offered the oblation at Jerusalem. But this agency was not to be confined to the Jews who were first entrusted with it ; not only of them, but also of the Gentiles themselves, priest and Levites should be chosen to offer this oblation—*i.e.*, to complete the vocation of the Gentiles. Should the context be supposed to require a still more general meaning, it may be that the sacerdotal mediation of the ancient Israel between Jehovah and the other nations, which was symbolized by the Levitical and Aaronic priesthood, was to cease with the necessity that brought it into being, and to leave the Divine presence as accessible to one race as another. A.

22. *For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I am making (or about to make), are standing (or about to stand) before me, saith Jehovah,*

so shall stand your name and your seed. The promise is addressed to Israel as a church, from which the natural descendants of Jacob for the most part have been cut off, and the object of this verse is to assure the Church that notwithstanding this excision it should still continue to exist, not only as a *church*, but as the *Church*, the identical body which was clothed in the forms of the old dispensation and which still survives when they are worn out and rejected. The grand error incident to a change of dispensations was the very one which has perverted and obscured the meaning of these prophecies, the error of confounding the two Israels whom Paul so carefully distinguishes, and of supposing that the promises given to the Church when externally identified with one race are continued to that race even after their excision from the Church. It was to counteract this very error that the verse before us was recorded, in which God's people, comprehending a remnant of the natural Israel and a vast accession from the Gentiles, are assured that God regards them as His own chosen people, not a new one, but the same that was of old, and that the very object of the great revolution here and elsewhere represented as a new creation was to secure their perpetuity and constant recognition as His people. Since then He creates new heavens and a new earth for this very purpose, that purpose cannot be defeated while these heavens and that earth endure. A.—These “new heavens and earth” can be no other than those which are described more fully (chap. 65 : 17–25)—*i.e.*, the new religious constitution; the Christian, Messianic age. As this is to be permanent, so shall Christians themselves as a race, a “seed,” a constant succession of fathers and sons, generation after generation, remain before God. H. C.

23. The new moons and the Sabbaths are mentioned, because, under the law, though the yearly feasts were to be celebrated at Jerusalem, yet the new moons and the Sabbaths were religiously observed all the country over in the “schools of the prophets” first, and afterward “in the synagogues” (2 K. 4 : 23; Amos 8 : 5; Acts 15 : 21), according to the model of which Christian assemblies seem to be performed. Where the Lord's day is weekly sanctified, and the Lord's supper monthly celebrated, and both duly attended on, there this promise is fulfilled, there the Christian new moons and Sabbaths are observed. See here, that God is to be worshipped in solemn assemblies, that it is the duty of all, as they have opportunity, to wait upon God in those assemblies. H.

And from one Sabbath to another. There can be no permanent worship of God and no permanent religion on earth without a Sabbath; and hence it was, that while the observance of the feasts of tabernacles, and of the passover, and of the new moons made a part of the Hebrew ritual—enjoined by the ceremonial law—the law respecting the Sabbaths was incorporated with the Ten Commandments as of moral and perpetual obligation; and it will be literally true that all the race shall yet be brought to worship God on the return of that holy day. It was instituted in Paradise; and as one design of the plan of redemption is to bring man back to the state in which he was in Paradise, so one effect of the true religion everywhere will be and *is*, to make men reverence the Sabbath of the Lord. Every successful effort to propagate the true religion is a successful effort to extend the practice of observing that holy day; and just as certain as it is that Christianity will be spread around the world, so certain will it be that the holy Sabbath will be observed in all lands. *Barnes.*

23, 24. The whole prophecy closes with a solemn contrast between the blessings to the righteous and the shame and misery of the rebellious and profane. Earth, redeemed from the curse, will become the scene of holy and perpetual worship. The destruction of the sinners, that solemn contrast in a scene where righteousness and peace are to prevail, shall only deepen in upon “all flesh” the impression of God's holiness and majesty. In some mysterious way the sentence on the profane shall be visible to the Jews and Gentiles who have been spared, the blissful and holy inhabitants of “the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

The words of this last verse are borrowed by our Lord to announce the irreversible doom of the unfaithful. *Birka.*

24. “Going forth” is going out from the city of Jerusalem to gain a full and nearer view of the great valley of Hinnom, where the slain of the Lord that were “many” (verse 16) were piled in mountain masses, the worms feeding on their carcasses and the fires perpetually burning, yet never utterly consuming them. They are objects of abhorrence to all flesh, impressing a wholesome fear (so the word implies) of the life they lived as leading to and ending in such a death, and a wholesome horror of their sins as richly deserving a doom so fearful. It cannot be doubted that this verse alludes to Tophet as described in this prophet (chap. 30 : 33) and yet more fully (Jer. 7 : 30–34

and 19:6-15). To these views of Tophet, the valley of Hinnom, our Lord alludes (Mark 9:44, 46, 48), drawing from it the very terms in which He describes the scenes of the future punishment of the wicked. So it comes to pass naturally and legitimately that the judgments of God on guilty nations in the present world furnish not only the great principles which underlie all punishment of the wicked, but also the very terms which designate their place of torment, and the illustrations which represent the horrors of their doom. H. C.

The grand theme of these prophecies, as we have seen, is the relation of God's people to Himself and to the world; and in the latter stages of its history, to that race with which it was once outwardly identical. The great catastrophe with which the vision closes is the change of dispensations, comprehending the final abolition of the ceremonial law and its concomitants, the introduction of a spiritual worship and the consequent diffusion of the Church, its vast enlargement by the introduction of all Gentile converts to complete equality of privilege and honor with the believing Jews, and the excision of the unbelieving Jews from all connection with the Church or chosen people, which they once imagined to have no existence independent of themselves. The contrast between these two bodies, the rejected Jews and their believing brethren forming one great mass with the believing Gentiles, is continued to the end, and presented for the last time in these two concluding verses, where the whole is condensed into a single vivid spectacle, of which the central figure is Jerusalem and its walls the dividing line between the two contrasted objects. Within is the true Israel, without the false. Within, a great congregation, even "all flesh," come from the east and the west, and the north and the south, while the natural children of the kingdom are cast out (Matt. 8:12). The end of the former is left to be imagined or inferred from other prophecies, but that of the latter is described or suggested in a way more terrible than all description. In the valley of the son of Hinnom, under the very brow of Zion and Moriah, where the children were once sacrificed to Moloch, and where purifying fires were afterward kept ever burning, the apostate Israel is finally exhibited, no longer living, but committed to the flames of Tophet. To render our conception more intense the worm is added to the flame, and both are represented as undying. That the contrast hitherto maintained may not be forgotten even in this closing scene, the men within the walls

may be seen by the light of those funereal fires coming forth and gazing at the ghastly scene, not with delight, as some interpreters pretend, but, as the text expressly says, with horror. Thus the verse becomes descriptive of the final doom of the ungodly, without any deviation from its proper sense, or any supposition of a mere allusion or accommodation in the use of the same figures by our Lord Himself in reference to future torments. All that is requisite to reconcile and even to identify the two descriptions is the consideration that the state of ruin here described is final and continuous, however it may be divided, in the case of individuals, between the present life and that which is to come. Hell is of both worlds, so that in the same essential sense although in different degrees it may be said both of him who is still living, but accursed, and of him who perished centuries ago, that his worm dieth not and his fire is not quenched. A.

The Doctrine of Eternal Judgment.

The importance of the doctrine of eternal judgment may be inferred from the prominent place it holds in the messages of God from first to last. It is involved in the first promise and warning in Paradise; it marks the close of Isaiah's message of glorious hope and Gospel promise. It forms the close of the Book of Ecclesiastes, and of the prophecies of Daniel, Hosea and Micah, of Zechariah and Haggai. It gives their tone to the closing sentences of the Sermon on the Mount, and forms the main topic of two of the chief discourses of Christ in the Gospels, and of the Second Epistle of Peter and that of Jude, and it is revealed with especial prominence from first to last in the visions of the apocalypse. Next to the glorious revelation of God Himself and the great work of redemption, it forms the third main feature in the whole scheme of revelation.

The revealed message of Scripture on judgment to come includes as a main feature, that from the days of Paradise to the return of Christ, the whole human race has been placed under an economy of redeeming love. "That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself;" that every child of man is called upon to repent and turn to God, invited and earnestly entreated to accept the offered gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus; that there is no fatal secret decree of reprobation by which any are positively shut out from a share in the blessing; that the invitations of God are sincere, earnest and real, and not in pretence only, as unbelieving hearts are prone to suspect, is

assured by a threefold pledge of Divine love. First, the oath and promise of God the Father, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways." Again, by the tears and lamentation of the Incarnate Son over guilty Jerusalem, "when He came near and beheld the city and wept over it, O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes!" And thirdly and lastly, by the parting message and invitation of the Holy and Eternal Spirit. "The Spirit and the Bride say Come; and let him that heareth say Come; and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." This invitation of Divine love, most clearly revealed in the Gospel, is also given, though more dimly, in that goodness of God shown in all His works, by which He "leadeth men to repentance," and the apostle assures us that even while He suffered the nations to walk in their own ways, "He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness;" and His judgment on all we are further assured will be according to the light they have received. *Birks.*

Remorse is the natural vengeance of sin upon a sinner. It is legitimate; it is just. We are never wronged in the vengeance of remorse. God has not wronged us in making us susceptible of such suffering; conscience does not wrong us in inflicting it; the holy universe does not wrong us in approving it. *Phelps.*—The conscious knowledge of having done wrong; of having had a spirit from God, pure with high aspirations, and of having dulled its delicacy and degraded its desires; of having quenched a light brighter than the sun's; of having done to another an injury that through time and through eternity never can be undone; the knowledge that every chance of excellence and every opportunity of good has been lost forever—this is the maddening remorse; this is wrath to come. *F. W. Robertson.*

None of the fathers had a deeper sense of the Divine love than Chrysostom, "the preacher of mercy," yet none asserted more emphatically the awful doctrine of eternal perdition. In his fifth homily he speaks of the bonds that are not loosed; in the eleventh, of the endless darkness, the deathless punishments; and in the twenty-third we read, "The penalties then to be inflicted are not such as to come to an end

and be concluded, but the punishment is eternal. For as the punishments of this world are concluded with the present life, so those of the next world continue perpetually." And further on in the same homily, he insists that after death the most vehement regrets are vain, as in the case of the rich man in the parable, whose lamentations were fruitless because he had neglected the time in which he ought to have secured the Divine mercy. *W. Bright.*

"What else shall God do with guilt but punish it?" Shall He give repentance and then forgive? But that is the very thing He has been offering from the first. Never will man or devil see the moment when he cannot repent if he would. But that is the very thing from which the incorrigible sinner recoils. He will have none of that. Repentance means submission. Better hell than that. Such is the relentless choice of the doomed one. Doomed because self-doomed. Doomed by the fearful omnipotence of his own free-will. Nothing else which it is in God's power to offer does he spurn from him with such concentration of obdurate and vindictive resolve. His whole being revolts from it with the intensity, at last, of ages of accumulated and malign passion.

Such is sin; once chosen and implanted and indurated in the very nature of man, by a life of abused probation, in which the grace of God has been scorned and the blood of Christ outraged. Once more, then, the question comes back unanswered: "What else shall God do with it?" Through all eternity, that is the question which infinite benevolence will ask of an awe-struck yet satisfied and adoring universe: "What else shall God do with it?" *Phelps.*

This is the consummation of the series of bright visions that passed before the mind of Isaiah. This is an appropriate termination of this succession of wonderful revelations. Where could it more appropriately terminate than in the consummation of all things—in the final triumph of the true religion, and in the complete and final destruction of all the enemies of God? The vision stretches on to the judgment, and is closed by a contemplation of those scenes which commence there, but which never end. The Church is triumphant. Its conflicts cease. Its foes are slain. Its Redeemer is revealed; and its everlasting happiness is founded on a basis which can never be shaken. *Barnes.*

So ends this wonderful prophetic scene. The kingdom of Messiah triumphant; His foes prostrate to rise no more. The nations gath-

ered by missionary labor come home to the bosom of Zion, and rejoice in her consolations ; but God's enemies, balked in every endeavor and meeting their doom of utter discomfiture, are shut up to shame and everlasting contempt—the objects of wholesome abhorrence, impressing on all beholders a salutary fear and dread of sin, and thus conducing to augment the moral forces which will forever sustain the throne of God and preserve His reverent worshippers in unswerving and ever-growing allegiance, homage and love. Such are the grand, momentous results of the Gospel scheme in our world—a world fearfully cursed indeed by sin, but more gloriously saved by grace—saved by the Son of God made incarnate to suffer and die, yet raised again to live and reign sublimely victorious in the latter end. H. C.

JEREMIAH AND HIS PROPHECIES.

JEREMIAH, who is the principal prophet in the second or Babylonian period of prophecy, lived in the reigns of Josiah, Shallum, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah. His long career began in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah (B.C. 629), and continued till the eleventh year of Zedekiah (B.C. 586), when Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 1: 2, 3), though he continued to prophesy even after that event. He is described as "the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth," a town not three miles distant from Jerusalem. His personal history is closely united with that of the times in which he lived. After the destruction of Jerusalem, he continued for a time in the city; but he was afterward carried, against his will, into Egypt, along with his faithful friend and amanuensis, Baruch. There, in the city of Tahpanhes, we have the last clear glimpses of the prophet's life. After this all is uncertain. P. S.

Historical Sketch of the Period. It was not long before Jeremiah was born that the life and work of the great Isaiah came to an end; the apostasy and subsequent repentance of Manasseh, in whose reign Isaiah was murdered, must have been still fresh in the memory of men in the early years of Jeremiah. King Esarhaddon of Nineveh avenged the great disaster of Sennacherib, his father, before Jerusalem in the days of Isaiah when Hezekiah reigned, by taking the holy city and by leading captive her king, Hezekiah's son Manasseh, to Babylon. Manasseh was subsequently released, and consented as a vassal king to Nineveh to hold Judah. Assurbanipal succeeded Esarhaddon, his father, B.C. 668. The Ninevite king resided principally in Babylon, which was already showing signs of dissatisfaction with the Ninevite rule. He was evidently a strong sovereign, and completely broke the Egyptian power by dividing Egypt into twelve petty kingdoms. During his reign Judah remained a tributary to Nineveh. In the seventeenth year of the reign of this Assurbanipal, king of Nineveh, Psameticus restored the broken unity of Egypt, and once more united the whole

land. Egypt now, for a season, disputed the sovereignty of the Eastern world with Nineveh. When this restoration of Egypt to the position of a great power took place, Manasseh was in the twenty-fourth year of his reign, and from this time gradually grew up that strong inclination in Judah to court the friendship of Egypt, which eventually proved its ruin. Politically, the great work of Jeremiah's life was to combat this fatal policy. Manasseh was succeeded by Amon, and Amon by the good king Josiah. During Josiah's reign Jeremiah exercised great influence. This prince lost his life fighting against Pharaoh Necho at Megiddo. Four years after its victory at Megiddo, the Egyptian power was totally destroyed at Carchemish by a new power which had lately risen on the ruins of the old Ninevite dominion.

The power of Nineveh had been for some time declining, partly owing to a great invasion of Scythians, partly to the discontent of Babylon—a discontent which ended in Babylon asserting its independence. The Eastern world, two years after the battle of Megiddo, in which Josiah lost his life, was astonished at learning that Nineveh, so long the Queen City of the East, had fallen before the armies of Cyaxares the Mede and Nabopolassar, king of the recently freed Babylon. The ruin of Nineveh was complete. Two years later the son of Nabopolassar, the famous Nebuchadnezzar, broke the Egyptian power at Carchemish. The great Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar was temporarily stayed in his career of conquest by his father's death and the need of his presence at Babylon in order to consolidate his power. Egypt and her vassal States became now subject to Babylon. Among these latter was Judah and her king, Jehoiakim, who succeeded Josiah.

After three years Jehoiakim rebelled against the authority of Babylon; Nebuchadnezzar in person took the field against his rebellious vassal. Jerusalem was invested and soon fell. Her king was put to death, and a few months later Jehoiachin—who succeeded his father in

the sovereignty—was, with the flower of the people, carried captive to Babylon. A remnant was left in Judah, and Zedekiah reigned as their king. Again Egypt became their snare. Something like a revival of the Egyptian power had taken place under Pharaoh Hophra; the Jews left under King Zedekiah in Judah, turning against their mighty Babylonian master, sought to strengthen themselves by an alliance with Egypt, against the advice of Jeremiah, who had remained with Zedekiah in Judah. The Chaldean vengeance did not tarry long; again was Jerusalem besieged, again captured. Then the Temple was burned, the king was blinded, the best of the poor remnant of the people left by Nebuchadnezzar were carried into Babylonia. Gedaliah, a friend of Jeremiah, was appointed governor of the now desolate and almost deserted land.

Gedaliah was shortly after murdered by some self-styled patriot Jews, who, after their deed of blood, fled, carrying Jeremiah, an unwilling captive, with them to the city of Tahpanhes, in Egypt. Here we lose sight of the aged and desolate prophet. *Spence.*

The life of Jeremiah as prophet, and that of Josiah as king, ran parallel eighteen years, when Josiah fell at Megiddo in battle with Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. We may well suppose that this was the first great sorrow of the prophet's life. He mourned for his fallen king as one mourneth for a dear and honored personal friend and for a great public benefactor. (See 2 Chron. 35 : 25.) How much he knew beforehand of the graceless sons of this good king who would be candidates for the vacant throne does not appear. He had abundant and sad occasion to know them in future years. While Josiah lived, Jeremiah does not appear at all in the history as given in the books of Kings and Chronicles, nor does his own book of prophecies show him to have been prominent during Josiah's life. Only a small portion of his recorded prophecies bear date in the reign of Josiah—viz., chap. 1, and another message beginning chap. 3 : 6, and ending perhaps with the sixth chapter. There can be no doubt, however, that he sympathized deeply with this great reformation, which commenced vigorously just one year before his call as a prophet, and which seems to have culminated in a very extraordinary passover five years later (2 Chron. 35 : 1-19). It was everything in this reformation to press the conscience of the people with the great and solid truths of religion, and to urge them to thorough self-searching and to radical repentance of all sins of the heart as

well as of the life. In this line of effort, we shall see that the messages sent of the Lord by Jeremiah during this period were admirably well adapted for effect, and if duly heeded, would have been most wholesome in their influence. After the death of Josiah, our prophet soon began to have new experiences. Previously he had been amply protected in his person and powerfully sustained by the king and his court. Subsequently there came a new order of things. Four kings fill the period between Josiah's death (B.C. 611) and the fall of the kingdom (B.C. 588). Three of them were sons of Josiah, and one his grandson; but not one of them bears any other record than that of "doing evil in the sight of the Lord." Of the four sons of Josiah, the eldest, Jehoiakim, probably died either before or with his father. He does not appear later. His third son, Jehoahaz, was put on the throne first, and by the people, probably because he stood higher in their esteem than Jehoiakim, the second in age. He represented the Chaldean party, following the policy of his father, who fell in an attempt to withstand the Egyptian king, then on his march against the Chaldeans. Pharaoh Necho, returning from his northern expedition, deposed the young king of Judah after a reign of but three months, and took him captive to Egypt, where he died. Necho placed his elder brother, Jehoiakim, on the throne, where he reigned eleven years—one of the meanest and wickedest kings that ever disgraced that throne. A very considerable portion of Jeremiah's prophecies fall within this reign—many of them about his fourth year, when the first serious invasion by the Chaldean forces occurred and the first large deportation of captives. Jehoiakim represented the Egyptian party; was always averse to Jeremiah's exhortations from the Lord to yield to the Chaldean power, and hence stood opposed to the prophet on political as well as religious grounds. Consequently he permitted and even instigated a rancorous persecution against Jeremiah, from which the latter more than once barely escaped with his life. This was the prophet's time of sternest trial. After a reign of eleven years, Jehoiakim was taken in chains to Babylon, and his son Jehoiachin (otherwise called Jeconiah and Coniah) was enthroned in his stead. Three months of wicked misrule and of treachery against the Chaldean king ended his reign, and he went a prisoner to Babylon, where he was imprisoned at least thirty-seven years. After him came Zedekiah, yet another and the youngest son of the good Josiah, but doing only evil against the Lord

throughout his reign of eleven years. He was weak as well as wicked, and perhaps the less wicked in the sight of God for his weakness. He would have protected Jeremiah more if he had dared, or if he had been manly enough to assert his rights as king. He lived to see the great city seized by the Chaldeans, the nation ruined, and his sons slain. His own eyes were then put out and himself taken in chains to Babylon, to die dishonored there. Jeremiah delivered to him many messages from the Lord; suffered severe persecution during his reign; made earnest but unavailing efforts to withstand the growing corruption of both court and people, and to induce repentance toward God, or at least quiet submission to the inevitable and divinely ordained supremacy of the Chaldeans, but was baffled in every endeavor. Such is the disheartening story of Jeremiah's labors and protests during these twenty-three years from the death of Josiah to the utter overthrow of the city and kingdom. Within his public life fall the dates of Zephaniah and Habakkuk; the former within the reign of Josiah; the latter apparently in the first years of Jehoiakim, shortly before the first invasion from the fierce and terrible Chaldeans. Jeremiah survived the fall of the city and kingdom. His sympathies went with the better part of the people into their exile in Babylon, but he neither accompanied nor followed them in person. Twice he wrote them in a very encouraging and friendly strain, but either through his own convictions of duty, or through the special direction of the Lord, he cast in his lot with the poor remnant who remained a short time in the land, and ultimately, against his earnest protest, went to Egypt to perish there. Nebuchadnezzar befriended him in a most decided manner, and if he had gone to Babylon, his lot would apparently have been as pleasant as that of a captive with his captive brethren well could be; but Jeremiah manifestly sought not his own, but the things of his great Master. Hence, in the footsteps of the greater "Man of sorrows," he followed the remnant who had no shepherd and no heart to heed one, and filled out his remaining days among an ungrateful, disobedient, and unappreciative people. Beyond this exile to Egypt and these thankless labors to call back to God the lowest, weakest, and wickedest portion of the Jewish people, we hear of him no more. There are some lessons of great interest and value to be found in the life and spirit of this prophet. It is God's way to raise up His own instruments and adapt them for the

work He gives them to do. Jeremiah was an illustration of this Divine policy. We note how He yielded to the pressure of God's hand upon him (20 : 7, 9); how step by step he moved on into peril and darkness thickening fearfully in his path; how "he endured as seeing Him who is invisible;" how he never so quailed before his enemies as to withhold one of the stern words God gave him to say; how we rarely hear the slightest murmur from his lips; how when human frailty seemed too much for present grace, the Lord kindly gave more grace; how he filled out the very last days of a prophetic life, which overran forty years, with suffering, daring, witnessing, beseeching, and weeping—almost evermore—with apparently fruitless endeavor, and with no consolations known to us save those of a clear conscience and an approving God. His heart never became misanthropic—never had the least touch of the malign element. He never ceased to love with the love of sympathy and pity the wickedest and vilest of those whose sins the Lord sent him to denounce. There is a wonderful record for us in *those tears!* Would to God that all His ministering servants kept their own spirit in a sympathy with Christ's as near, warm, and effective as did this prophet of Anathoth! H. C.

In the time of Isaiah two courses were open for Israel. Either to let itself go down the steep descent which opened under its feet, or to strengthen its hold upon the tableland above. A century and a half later, in the time of Jeremiah, this alternative was no longer open. Israel had already descended far down the fatal slope, and was on the point of falling over the precipice. The people were giving themselves up to idolatry with an ardor akin to madness. Never has this strange worship better deserved the name of "*possession on a great scale*," which has been bestowed upon it with so much reason. All the divinities of the East, Baal, Astarte, Moloch, Thammuz, seem to have agreed to meet in Jerusalem; the Temple had become a pantheon. The three last kings were among the very worst that the little State ever had. Under Jehoiakim, the Chaldean conqueror, Nebuchadnezzar, appears for the first time in the Holy Land, and Judah becomes tributary to him. A little later, Jehoiachin, his successor, is himself taken captive with the best part of his people. Finally, under Zedekiah, Nebuchadnezzar strikes the last blow; Jerusalem is destroyed, together with the Temple.

Such are the circumstances in the midst of which Jeremiah was called to exercise the prophetic ministry. Never was heavier burden

laid upon the shoulders of mortal man. A man of tender, loving, yielding, deeply impressible spirit, Jeremiah intensely loved his country. He would have given all he had to see Judah flourishing, Jerusalem prosperous; and, lo, we see him compelled by his destiny to announce to his fellow-citizens nothing but misfortune. His office was like that of the minister obliged to accompany a criminal to the scaffold. He induces Israel and its king to submit to the decree of the Divine justice. He depicts the uselessness, danger and sin of resistance. At the sound of these strange words his hearers spring upon him with indignation and rage; they accuse him of connivance with the enemies of his country. King Jehoiakim tears up the collection of his first discourses, and throws the shreds into the fire.

The fiery patriots seize the prophet, and throw him to the bottom of a well without water. He passes whole days and nights in this horrible prison. But what are his physical sufferings compared with the moral torment he endures in seeing himself treated as the enemy of his country—he who lives and suffers only for love of her? Can one be surprised, if now and then sinking under the burden, he is tempted, like Job, to curse the day of his birth?

But these are only transitory moments of weakness. Soon faith regains the ascendant, and with the same courage with which he had dared to preach to his people submission to the foreign conqueror, he now endeavors to animate them once more with hope, and boldly proclaims the deliverance that shall come. One day, while the Chaldean army still holds Jerusalem in siege, Jeremiah buys, by a legal act, for himself and his descendants, the field on which the army of the Chaldeans is encamped, thus giving to Israel, at the very moment when he announced its coming destruction, a public pledge of his belief in its future restoration. Another time he announces that after seventy years, when Israel shall have expiated all the Sabbaths and all the sabbatical years they had profaned, this people shall return from the strange land and re-enter the land of their fathers. Nay more, he sees the justice of God, now so merciless to them and under whose blows he had counselled them to bow down, ready soon to rise up in favor of the guilty but repentant nation and to pronounce its absolution. And in the strength of this courageous faith, he is not afraid to give to the Messiah that name which defies all present misfortunes: the *Lord our Righteousness*.

This is because, upon the ruins of the old

covenant, henceforth broken through the faithlessness of Israel, Jeremiah sees another arising, founded upon a higher contract, more excellent both in its nature and its duration than that of Sinai. Here is the culminating point not only of the prophecy of Jeremiah, but of that of the whole Old Testament; the marvellous prediction of the abolition of that very covenant to which the prophecy itself belongs, and of the coming in of a totally different order of things, resting upon a new basis (Jer. 31 : 31-34).

We do not think history contains another instance of a religion which, while claiming to be Divine, yet proclaims its own insufficiency, and announces a new one which will bestow upon humanity more excellent gifts. This is that miracle of self-abnegation which is repeated later on in time, in the personal relation of John the Baptist to Jesus Christ.

The renewing of hearts by the Holy Spirit—that renewal which is the fruit of the forgiveness of sins and the spring of an obedience free and filial, which the law never had the power to produce—this is the basis of the new covenant, announced by Jeremiah, which should one day be established between Jehovah and mankind. These foundations, so distinctly indicated six centuries beforehand, were really laid in the two days, Good Friday and Pentecost; they are these—reconciliation through the blood of the Lamb and renewal of the heart by the Holy Spirit. Here we discover in the prophet an intuition, the purest and most spiritual, of the kingdom of God upon earth. Here we see the noble hopes with which God sustained him and the whole nation at the moment when they were witnessing the downfall of the visible theocracy.

Accordingly, when, after a long siege, the enemy effected an entrance into Jerusalem, Jeremiah was able to contemplate with resignation the destruction of the city which he loved, the burning of the Temple in which he had so often officiated as a priest. The conqueror treated him with respect; he gave him the choice of either accompanying him to Babylon or remaining in the land of his fathers. Jeremiah had no hesitation in preferring his own desolated country to the splendor of the foreign capital. It was at this time, no doubt, that he composed those fine elegies which are collected in the Book of Lamentations. Then, faithful to the last to his thankless mission, he followed without delay the remainder of his people into Egypt, whither, after the assassination of the Chaldean governor, the remnant of the Israelites fled for shelter from the vengeance which they

feared. According to Jewish tradition, Jeremiah perished in Egypt, a victim to the hatred drawn down upon him by the warnings which he was never weary of uttering to these senseless people.

Succeeding ages have done justice to Jeremiah. The more his contemporaries humiliated and ill-treated him, the more has posterity exalted and glorified him, to such a degree that in the time of Jesus, as we see in the New Testament, he was known by the name simply of *the prophet*. And this was but right. If the picture which he has drawn of the new covenant is the culminating point of prophecy, is not his own personal fate the most complete type of that of the Messiah? Is not his conflict with the excited patriots and false prophets of his time the prelude to that of Jesus with those Pharisees and zealots who over-excited the carnal hopes of Israel, and were preparing for them the most terrible of delusions? Jeremiah is certainly, more than any other before John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Man of Sorrows.

God as the Righteous One—that is the dominant idea of his ministry. To bow beneath the hand of God when He chastises, and then to wait upon Him as alone having power to absolve the nation on their repentance—this, indeed, was the very message which Israel needed at the time when Jeremiah was given to them as their counsellor and their guide. We have just seen with what unconquerable fidelity this naturally gentle and tender heart succeeded in fulfilling this office; God, when He called him, had “touched his mouth with His hand.” *Godet.*

Jeremiah's mission was to interpret and to immortalize in literature the failure of the experiment of a visible, genuine, holy empire. It was Jeremiah's to feel all the sublimity and glory of the legislation of Moses, of the conquests of Joshua, of the constitutions of Samuel, of the royalty of David, and Solomon, and Josiah, and then to see all this overwhelmed in darkness because the Jewish people were basely false to themselves and to their God. Jeremiah's life work was to pass through and to understand and to feel the saddest and most shameful of all earthly tragedies before that of Calvary—viz., the fall of the Jewish kingdom and the destruction of Solomon's Temple. It was his function to preserve for us these dreadful experiences in all their minutiae of guilt and ignominy.

We may compare Jeremiah in detail with the greatest men in Hebrew history, and always to

his advantage. We may take the darkest hour in the life of Moses, or of Joshua, or of Samuel, or of Elijah, or of Paul, and we shall find that Jeremiah had a similar experience, only tenfold darker. The prayer of Moses was heard, and the people were pardoned. Jeremiah had a different experience. He was bidden, “Pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to Me: for I will not hear thee.” God said: “Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of My sight and let them go forth.” If Moses is majestic in the strength and victory of his intercession, much more is Jeremiah majestic, going forth uncomfited to his long and dreadful work among his doomed fellow-countrymen, for whom he was not even allowed to pray. Elijah fled away before the threats of Jezebel into the desert, sat down under a juniper-tree and prayed for death. Jeremiah was not permitted to flee away. Firm at his post where Elijah had not had courage to stand, Jeremiah stood to the bitter end. Paul wrote in one of his letters: “I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart.” But this was only a part of Paul's experience. He had the privilege of going far away from unready Jerusalem to do a work of magnificent constructiveness among the Gentiles, where multitudes of converts became his joy and his crown. Jeremiah, through his long ministry, had only the great sorrow and unceasing pain in his heart, and nothing else. His duty was to stay year after year in Jerusalem, rejected, threatened, set in the stocks, cast into the miry dungeon, repeating over and over a fearful message to unwilling ears, with never the joy of a single success.

Thus neither Moses, nor Elijah, nor Paul was ever subjected to a tithe of what Jeremiah endured. As a sufferer he stands next to our Lord Himself. Why should we attribute His distress to morbid predisposition to melancholy? If he shrank from the stern task assigned him, Moses and Isaiah had done the same. If he yielded to discouragement in defeat, Joshua had done the same. If he longed for a lodge in the wilderness, the bold Elijah had sought the same. If he cursed the day of his birth, Job, the great example of patience, had done the same. If he wept over Jerusalem, so did our Lord. That Jeremiah preserved the sweetness of his affections, and the loyalty of his piety, and the boldness of his official testimony to the end argues a pre-eminently strong, ardent, high-spirited, heroic nature.

Jeremiah was a patriot whose duty it was to discourage national hopes and counsel submission to a foreign foe. It was never his privilege to arouse the national spirit, to fire the hearts of the soldiers of Israel, to call up the mighty enthusiasm which had borne to victory the armies of the Lord of Hosts in the glorious days of Joshua, and Gideon, and David. Though a patriot, he seemed to his fellow-citizens a traitor, without faith in his country or sympathy for her defenders.

As a prophet, Jeremiah had not the satisfaction of reforming, inspiring or leading in anything. He found the whole nation gross, idolatrous, unchaste, false, dishonest, murderous, wilful, obstinate. Sodom and Gomorrah alone could furnish a parallel. And Jeremiah's work was to predict to these people invasion, famine, pestilence, drought, defeat, captivity, despair, the sack of the city and the destruction of the Temple. No other prophet ever had such a task. "I beheld the earth," said Jeremiah, "and, lo, it was waste and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved to and fro. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful field was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord and before His fierce anger." With such a grim message Jeremiah stood through his long ministry like an iron pillar, like a brazen wall, in antagonism to the kings, and the princes, and the priests, and the prophets, and the people. Yet, naturally, he had the gentle, sympathetic heart of a child. There were prophets enough at that day, high in public esteem, whose smooth eloquence found ready applause. Jeremiah stood alone, not that he was naturally polemical or uncompromising, not for any reason in himself, but because the others were all wrong, and he was under a Divine necessity to stand where he did. Martin Luther before the Diet of Worms was not more heroically loyal to truth. Jeremiah stood like Abdiel, as Milton has pictured him among the rebellious angels.

Yet Jeremiah did not meet scorn with "retorted scorn," as Milton makes Abdiel; he met it with tears.

Jeremiah was a lonely man. He had no home into which he might run out of the storms of public life, as into a little sunny harbor of peace. This was by Divine command. The consolation of wife and children was denied him. "Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither

shalt thou have sons and daughters in this place." As Jeremiah walked along the streets of Jerusalem and looked into the bright faces of the children, he knew that each of those children was destined for a death of horror. Thus, as a man, Jeremiah must shut up his heart and repress all his tenderest affections; as a citizen, he must live in the midst of the murderous treachery of his nearest neighbors; as a patriot, he must stand helpless in sight of the slow destruction of his country; as a prophet, he must warn in vain, and with his unavailing remonstrances add to the guilt of the unrestrainable; and this was so, that all time might through him feel the doom of incorrigible national sin. Behold this grand figure standing there in the solitude of his grief over the ruins of the noblest experiment of ancient times. There he stands, comparing the Divine ideal of a visible kingdom of God on earth with the reality, comparing the possibilities and hopes of the past with the facts of the present and the certainties of the future. In him we see the dignity of unselfish grief. In him we see the manliness of tears. Looking at him, we see that the broadest, truest, strongest, bravest, may for that very reason be the saddest. *Ballantine.*

HIS PROPHECIES.

Their programme was simple. Their central theme was the coming supremacy of the Chaldean nation: and this at a time when nothing was feared from Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar was unknown, when Egypt was ascendant and Pharaoh-necho the terror of Judah. He foretold the overthrow of the Jewish nation by this power from "the north;" defined the term of the Chaldean ascendancy and Judah's captivity, and predicted the emancipation of Judah and restoration of Jerusalem when the seventy years had expired.

Their design was threefold. It was: To *forewarn* the Jews of impending doom on account of national pollution and apostasy. To *invite* them to repentance, promising immediate Divine forgiveness and ultimate redemption from Babylon. To *assure* the godly among them by predictions of Messiah's gracious advent, and the spiritual blessings incident to His reign.

Their verification. During Jeremiah's life, his predictions fulfilled in: The captivity of Jehoiakim and his queen-mother (22:24-26). The death of Hananiah, the deceitful prophet, at the time foretold (28:15-17). The inglorious end and shameful burial of Jehoiakim (22:18,

19; 36:30). The fate of Zedekiah (23:2, 3). The invasion of Judah by the king of Babylon, and Jewish captivity (20:4, etc.). The rifling of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar (27:19-22). The destruction of Jerusalem by fire (21:10; 32:29; 37:8-10). The Chaldean subjugation of Egypt (43:10-12; 44:29, 30), and supremacy over surrounding nations (27:1-8). *After the prophet's decease*: The termination of the Babylonish captivity after seventy years (25:11; see Dan. 9:2). The return of the Jews to their own country (29:10-14). The downfall and desolation of Babylon, and date of the event (25:12). The advent of Messiah (23:3-8; 31:31-34; 33:6-9). *Anon.*

The absence of any chronological order in the present structure of the collection of Jeremiah's prophecies is obvious at the first glance. In the present order we have two great divisions: 1. Chaps. 1-45. Prophecies delivered at various times, directed mainly to Judah, or connected with Jeremiah's personal history. 2. Chaps. 46-51. Prophecies connected with other nations. Chap. 52, taken largely, though not entirely, from 2 K. 25, may be taken either as a supplement to the prophecy or as an introduction to the Lamentations. Looking more closely into each of these divisions, we have the following sections:

1. Chaps. 1-21. Containing probably the substance of "the book" of 36:32, and including prophecies from the thirteenth year of Josiah to the fourth of Jehoiakim; 1:3, however, indicates a later revision, and the whole of chap. 1 may possibly have been added on the prophet's retrospect of his whole work from this its first beginning; chap. 21 belongs to a later period, but has probably found its place here as connected, by the recurrence of the name Pashur, with chap. 20.

2. Chaps. 22-25. Shorter prophecies, delivered at different times, against the kings of Judah and the false prophets; 25:13, 14 evidently marks the conclusion of a series of prophecies; and that which follows, 25:15-38, the germ of the fuller predictions in 46-49, has been placed here as a kind of completion to the prophecy of the seventy years and the subsequent fall of Babylon.

3. Chaps. 26-28. The two great prophecies of the fall of Jerusalem, and the history connected with them. Chap. 26 belongs to the earlier, chaps. 27 and 28 to the later period of the prophet's work. Jehoiakim, in 27:1, is evidently (cf. verse 3) a mistake for Zedekiah.

4. Chaps. 29-31. The message of comfort for the exiles in Babylon.

5. Chaps. 32-44. The history of the last two years before the capture of Jerusalem, and of Jeremiah's work in them and in the period that followed. The position of chap. 45, unconnected with anything before or after it, may be accounted for on the hypothesis that Baruch desired to place on record so memorable a passage in his own life, and inserted it where the direct narrative of his master's life ended. The same explanation applies in part to chap. 36.

6. Chaps. 46-51. The prophecies against foreign nations, ending with the great prediction against Babylon.

7. The supplementary narrative of chap. 52. The Book of Lamentations contains the utterance of Jeremiah's sorrow upon the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. It consists of five chapters, each of which, however, is a separate poem, complete in itself, and having a distinct subject, but brought at the same time under a plan which includes them all. The book has supplied thousands with the fullest utterance for their sorrows in the critical periods of national or individual suffering. We may well believe that it soothed the weary years of the Babylonian exile. On the ninth day of the month of Ab (July-August), the Lamentations of Jeremiah were read, year by year, with fasting and weeping, to commemorate the misery out of which the people had been delivered. It enters largely into the order of the Latin Church for the services of Passion week. P. S.

The Book of Jeremiah is commonly regarded as very puzzling, by reason of the imperfections of its text, its confused chronological order and the great differences between the Septuagint and the Hebrew. But if we suppose these peculiarities to be due to the lack of editing, rather than to false editing, it is not difficult to frame a hypothesis that will account, in general, for the form in which the book now stands, in the Hebrew. Suppose that Jeremiah, late in his life, or some disciple of his, soon after his death, planned an edition of his works, and for that purpose got together and began to classify, a collection of papers—the same papers now found in the Book of Jeremiah. Entering upon his work, he finds the bulkiest paper in the collection to be a rough sketch of the earlier discourses of the prophet; it is divided by titles into six parts, and each part is a sketch of several separate prophecies; in length, the prophecy sketches vary from a few lines each to a pretty full report; at first, they are separated by formal sub-titles, but farther on the work is more negligently done, both in this

and other respects ; in some cases poetry and prose are intermingled. In fine, this is a document covering the same ground with the volume of Jeremiah's prophecies written by Baruch (Jer. 36 : 9-32). If it cannot be proved to be the same document, at least this cannot be disproved. As it is, on the whole, the earliest paper in the series, the collector takes it as the beginning of his projected work. It is our present Jeremiah, chaps. 1-20.

Among the remaining larger papers he finds a connected narrative of the experiences of Jeremiah in connection with the downfall of Jerusalem, the narrative found in Jer. 37-44. It is carefully written and classical, quite different from the rough sketch in the first twenty chapters. As it contains the latest recorded facts in the personal history of Jeremiah, he lays it beside the rough sketch, to form the conclusion of that part of the proposed work.

Next he finds, perhaps already put together, and at all events marked by their contents as a group by themselves, certain poems, of different dates, concerning the nations ; and groups these, after the narrative, as a new section of his work (Jer. 46-51). To this group of poems

he prefixes the little poem concerning Baruch (Jer. 45), finding no better place for it elsewhere.

Among the remaining papers, he finds one that is peculiar, the one now constituting Jer. 52 ; it seems to be a study in the history of Israel, connected with the matters recorded in Kings concerning the building and the destruction of Solomon's Temple. As it has no affiliation with any other documents in his collection, he assigns to it its proper place as an appendix.

He now has remaining the fifteen prophecies contained in Jer. 21-36. Most of these are dated. Among them are poems, addresses, narratives and one epistle. Some of them deal with events already treated of in the rough sketch and the narrative ; but as a whole, they belong between the two, and the collector disposes of them by placing them in that position, without the trouble to arrange them further. And at this point his work was arrested, leaving the book in the shape in which we find it. Presumably he intended to arrange these fifteen papers chronologically, and to revise the whole, but was somehow prevented from carrying out his intention. W, J. B.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTER I.

CALL AND COMMISSION.

- 1 : 1** THE words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in 2 the land of Benjamin : to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son 3 of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah ; unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.
- 4, 5 Now the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee ; I have 6 appointed thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God ! behold, I cannot 7 speak : for I am a child. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child : for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt 8 speak. Be not afraid because of them : for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.
- 9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth ; and the LORD said unto me, 10 Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth : see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, and to destroy and to overthrow ; to build, and to plant.
- 11 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou ? And 12 I said, I see a rod of an almond tree. Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen : 13 for I watch over my word to perform it. And the word of the LORD came unto me the

second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething caldron; and the face thereof is from the north. Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgements against them touching all their wickedness; in that they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands. Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at them, lest I dismay thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

THIS chapter introduces the name of the author of this book of prophecies, the period of time which they cover, the call and commission of the prophet, and a succinct statement of the work assigned him. Its consideration should be preceded by a careful reading of the preceding introductory section, as well as a general review of Sections 44-49 in Vol. VII. of this Work, which contain the history of events collateral with Jeremiah's life. B.

1-3. The prophet's life and labors really continued somewhat later than the eleventh year and fifth month of Zedekiah. The prophecies and events recorded (chaps. 40-45) are manifestly subsequent to that. But probably it was not deemed important to be more specific in this brief introduction. The thirteenth year of Josiah was B.C. 629. From this date till the final destruction of the city (588 B.C.) was forty-one years. Jeremiah's ministry continued on yet further; how long is not known.

4, 5. "Sanctified" here means *set apart* to a special service, and not simply and strictly cleansed from sin. To "*set apart*" is the primary sense of the word. The word "ordained" Hebrew usage currently employs in the sense of *appoint, make*, so that "I gave thee to the service and work of a prophet for the nations" means I appointed thee to this service. The object of the Lord in saying to Jeremiah, "I had My eye on thee for My prophet to the nations before thou wast born," was to give him the greater assurance of his call, and to impress the more strongly on his mind that God had a work for him to do from which he could not be excused. The reader should not assume that God's foreknowledge was any greater or His antecedent plans any more fixed in the case of Jeremiah than in every other case. It comes not of any specialty in respect to particular individuals, but of God's essen-

tial nature, that He knows and plans the course of human life before its existence begins. As this knowing and planning in no-wise lessened either the personal freedom of action or the moral responsibility of Jeremiah, so neither can it overrule or in the least disturb the perfectly free agency of any other being—human, angelic, or diabolic. H. C.

5. *Before I formed thee* I had destined thee to the prophetic office before thou wert born: I had formed My plan, and appointed thee to be My envoy to this people. Paul speaks of his own call to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles in similar terms (Gal. 1:15, 16). A. C. —How much of this spirit of certitude and conviction is needed for the ordinary life of the Christian? Have we the measure of it we require? or are we inefficient and useless because of our lack of it? There can be no question that such a spirit is inculcated by Christianity, and that reasonable grounds are afforded us all upon which to be thoroughly persuaded in our own mind. Acting upon our deepest convictions and most unalterable certainties is the only way to attain to a sound apprehension of Divine things and an efficient condition of service.

5-19. *How He constrained Jeremiah to undertake this work.* He gave him certainty as to his being called to the prophetic work. To know that we are indeed called of God to any work is an unfailing source of strength therein (verse 5). He made him feel that necessity was laid upon him; "thou shalt go;" "thou shalt speak" (verse 7). So Jeremiah himself afterward says (chap. 20:9) God's word was like "a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." What a help to the preacher of God's truth is such a conviction as this! He promised His presence and delivering grace (verse 8).

Consciousness of security and safety in God will give a dauntless courage in the face of any and of all opposition. He gave him special qualifications for his work. Words and power of speech (verse 9). Immovable and unflinching strength of will, a determination and resolve that would not waver (verse 18). He showed him that the rooting up and the destruction were not ends in themselves, but to lead on to planting and to building afresh (verse 10). To know that we are working on to a good and blessed end is no small encouragement to us in working through all manner of difficulty to reach that end. He made him vividly realize the nature and nearness of the judgments he foretold. This was the purpose of the visions of the rod of the almond tree and the seething pot (verses 11-15). The first vision told of God's judgment close at hand. The second, of the quarter whence these judgments come, and of the fierce, furious character of the foes who should come upon them. Jeremiah was enabled to "see well" the visions—that is, to realize very forcibly what they meant. Oh, if we could but more vividly realize what the anger of God is against sin; if we could have a vision of the wrath of God; with how much more power and urgency should we plead with men to flee from the wrath to come! He reminds Jeremiah of the sins that called for these judgments (verse 16). A deep sense of sin is indispensable to those who would earnestly warn of the doom of sin. And (verse 19) God again gives His servant the blessed assurance, "They shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee to deliver thee." Thus did God equip the prophet and prepare him for his work. His God supplied all his need. It was a stern warfare on which he was to go, but he went not at his own charges. If we be summoned to difficult duty, we shall be supplied with all-sufficient strength. Only let us be careful to avail ourselves of the help assured, lest (verse 17) we be dismayed and God confound us before our enemies. Dread, therefore no commission that God entrusts thee with, for along with it will ever be found the grace, all the grace, needed for its successful discharge. P. C.

6-8. The Lord gave him to understand that He knew his qualifications, and had the grace and help of His own presence to set off against His young servant's conscious insufficiency. Hence He answered, "Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go *against* all to whom I send thee"—*against* rather than "*to*," as implying their foreseen antagonism to His message. H. C.

When he was shown that the strength in which he was to act and speak was not his own, and that he might always reckon upon supplies of grace and strength to discharge the high duties to which he was called, he no longer sought to evade them; and although the influence of his natural temper breaks out at times in complaints that he, of all men most unsuited, as he thought, had been chosen for the place he filled, and in sighings for that retired and peaceful life he must know no more—he fulfilled his tasks with unremitting diligence and unswerving fidelity for at least forty-two years, reckoning from the thirteenth year of King Josiah. In the course of his ministry he met with much opposition and ill-treatment from his countrymen of all classes, especially of the highest. The exigencies of the times constrained him, as the commissioned prophet of the Lord, to exercise an important influence upon the public policy of the time; and the part he took, though based on the most enlarged views of true patriotism and on the most exact apprehension of the nation's only safe and wise course in the circumstances of the times, was offensive to its natural pride; and the great ones, seeing how adverse his counsels were to their own plans of aggrandizement, affected to discredit his mission, and strove to destroy his influence. His keen susceptibility to injustice and misconstruction; his deep sense of the wickedness, perversity and ungodliness of men; his consciousness that the leaders of the people were, with wilful blindness, hurrying the nation with headlong speed to its ruin, together with his painful perception of the unpopularity to which his faithful denunciations exposed him, and the general dislike with which he was regarded—all this occasionally drew from him, in the bitterness of his soul, expressions which some have found it hard to reconcile with his religious principles and his near intercourse with heaven; but which considered with due regard to his natural temper, and all the circumstances of his position, will be found far more to demand our pity than our censure. Nay, there is none of the prophets with whom we contract an acquaintance so close and sympathizing, by virtue of those very indications of the natural temper and spirit of the man, which are permitted to ripple the surface of his prophetic career, and which enables us to recognize, in one so gifted from heaven, a man and a brother. The cries by which he attests the frequent anguish of his spirit find a response in our hearts. We pity him, feel for him, love him,

and this is more than can be said with regard to Isaiah, whose prophetic rapture more absorbed the individual man, and left no room for any other than feelings of admiration and awe toward him; whereas Jeremiah enlists our personal interests toward him by his starts of natural passion, and speaks to our hearts in his wails of human pain. *Kitto.*

It is plausibly supposed that Jeremiah was at this time not far from twenty years of age. II. C.

7. He must speak all that he is charged with: "Speak all that I command thee." He must forget nothing as minute, or foreign, or not worth mentioning; every word of God is weighty. He must conceal nothing for fear of offending; he must alter nothing under pretence of making it more fashionable or more palatable, but without addition or diminution "declare the whole counsel of God." H.

9. As if to meet very significantly the point of Jeremiah's plea, "I cannot speak," the Lord puts forth His hand and touches His mouth, as if He would say, "Trust Me for grace adapted to your wants—grace to help in all your need." It had also this further significance—viz., that the young man need not be forethoughtful about words to say or messages to deliver. The Lord was to provide both the things to be said and the words in which to say them. The prophet was simply to deliver the message which the Lord might give him.

10. This is a strong yet very palpable case in which the prophet is said to *do* what he merely proclaims the purpose of God to do. In chap. 31:28 the Lord says of Himself, "It shall come to pass that like as I have watched over them to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them to build and to plant." This is the work of God in His providence, and it is His alone. H. C.

I have—set thee over the nations. God represents His messengers the prophets as *doing* what He commanded them to declare *should be done*. In this sense they *rooted up, pulled down and destroyed*; declared God's judgments: they *builded up and planted*; declared the promises of His mercy. Thus God says to Isaiah (6:10), *Make the heart of this people fat—and shut their eyes.* Show them that they are *stupid and blind*; and that, because they have shut their eyes and hardened their hearts, God will in His judgments leave them to their hardness and darkness. A. C.

God here appoints Jeremiah to declare His purposes concerning the overthrow or restora-

tion of kingdoms and nations, according as they should persist in or repent of their sins (cf. chap. 18:7). In pursuance of these directions, some of the following prophecies foretell the destruction of the Jewish and other nations (see chap. 25:15, etc.); and others predict their restoration (see chaps. 30; 31; 48:47; 49:6, 39). *W. Louth.*

10-19. There is no glorious vision as in Isaiah's case; nothing of that awful and superhuman grandeur which characterizes Ezekiel's summons to the prophetic dignity. The images are tame and simple; but there is a strength of purpose indicated by them and a decisiveness in action, which were the real secret of Jeremiah's strength. In age probably just arrived at manhood—for forty years of active labor were before him, and finally, as is too probable, a martyr's death—called thus in the early beauty of youth, he sees first a branch of an almond-tree (chap. 1:11), and next a pot boiling upon a fire of thorns, and just ready to overturn from the unequal consumption of the blazing fuel. But the words that accompany these ordinary images are of startling strength. Jeremiah is set over kingdoms and nations as God's deputy on earth, with authority to "root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, and to build, and to plant;" and because in the execution of these awful powers he would have to confront the whole land, its king, its princes and people, God promises to make him firm and defiant as a defended city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls. Young in years, despondent in temper, God yet gives him a commission of wider and fuller authority than any ever conferred before, except it be that of Moses. But even to Moses the commission was to build up and form the Jewish nation; Jeremiah's is one chiefly of condemnation and destruction. Four verbs of ruin come first in his instructions, and then two only of restoration. For such a commission nothing less seems necessary than the energy and self-devotion of a Paul; but Jeremiah proved not unworthy of it. No man ever felt difficulties more; no man ever faced them with braver resolution, or more unflinchingly did his duty. R. P. S.

11, 12. To teach the youthful prophet yet further concerning his work, the Lord proceeds to give him two successive visions—the first, of an almond tree, to show that the judgments to be predicted would *come soon*; the second, of a seething pot, to show *from what quarter they would come*. This of an almond-tree might indicate its own significance to Jeremiah by the

sense of the Hebrew word which means the *waker*, the tree that wakes earliest in spring from the repose of winter. Pliny says of it that it begins to blossom in January and sometimes matures its fruit in March. Hence it becomes an expressive figure for what is to be done soon and with wakeful earnestness. But the Lord added His own interpretation: "I will hasten My word to perform it."

13-15. As said above, this second vision indicated the quarter from which these judgments should come. This "seething pot" is a pot under which the fire is *blown up*. We must think of this pot as out-of-doors, exposed to all winds. Its open face was from the north, so that its steam and smoke seemed to come from that quarter. Thus it indicated that the elements in that region were in commotion, and that calamity would soon open itself a way and come rushing forth from that direction. The Lord would rouse up all the families of those northern kingdoms, the assemblage of tribes and nations that were grouped together under the rule of the king of Babylon, and they should come and set up each his throne in the gates of Jerusalem. This language fitly describes the constitution of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom—a group of those powerful States which he had subjected to his sway. (See Dan. 3:29 and 4:1, 22.) It is noticeable that though Chaldea and Babylon lay east of Judah, yet their armies are said—not here alone, but usually elsewhere—to come *from the north*. The reason of this is that they entered Palestine from the north, going high up the valley of the Euphrates in a northwestern direction, and then coming into the land by way of Riblah and Hamath, on the north. This circuit was made to avoid the great Arabian desert which lay directly between Palestine and Chaldea. H. C.

From verse 14 it appears that the evil was to come from the north; and therefore the steam, which was designed for an emblem of that evil, must have issued from that quarter. The pot denoted the empire of the Babylonians and Chaldeans, lying to the north of Judea, and pouring forth its multitudes, like a thick vapor, to overspread the land. *Blayney*.

These comparisons had no appearance of meanness among a people accustomed to see in the temple of the Lord victims, the flesh of which was dressed in caldrons, for the use of the priests, and of the individuals who came thither to offer sacrifice. *Calmet*.

15. *All the families of the kingdoms of the north.* There were inferior kings and princes,

who were either allies or tributaries to the Babylonian empire (cf. chaps. 34:1; 50:41; 51:27). God saith all these shall join their forces with the Chaldean army, in order to the conquest of Judea. The word "family" is equivalent to *people* here, and in chaps. 8:3; 10:25. *W. Louth*.

16. This was pre-eminently the mission of Jeremiah. It was proper that here, in the outset of his work, the Lord should show him what it was to be, and prepare his mind to expect resistance and persecution.

17-19. Forewarning the prophet of an arduous and perilous work, the Lord admonished him to gird himself for the conflict and put his trust in the Lord his God. Correspondingly the Lord promises to make him strong to bear and to withstand opposition, even as a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a brazen wall are firm against whatever may assail or smite them. This call at once opened a new life before this young man. It promised nothing on the score of comfort, competence, ease or honor (of the sort that comes from men). On the contrary, the Lord plainly assumed that his life-work would be bitter, toilsome, thankless, repulsive—resisted at all points by those to whom he was sent with the word of the Lord; and the only consideration presented to offset so much hardship and suffering was, "I am with thee." H. C.

Jeremiah was the last of those gifted seers who combined their prophetic teaching with the active public life of statesmen and counselors of the nation. Against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes, against the priests, against the prophets, against the people of the land, he was "to gird up his loins, and arise and speak;" he was to be the solitary fortress, the column of iron, the wall of brass, fearless, undismayed, unconfounded—the one grand, immovable figure which alone redeems the miserable downfall of his country from triviality and shame—for forty years, day by day, at early morning, standing to deliver his mournful warnings, his searching rebukes, in the royal chamber or in the Temple court. He was the prophet of unwelcome, unpalatable truth, from whose clear vision all illusions had vanished away; in whom the high poetic aspirations of former times were transformed into the hard prose of common life; yet a prose which itself becomes more poetical than poetry, because of its own exceeding tragical simplicity. *Stanley*.

It was his mission to tell the people of their sins, to rebuke the nobles for their oppression,

the humbler orders for their vileness, the priesthood for their falseness, even his fellow-prophets for their infidelity to the living God. The whole nation, from prince to beggar, had reached the very bottom of national depravity ; and this lone man was set to tell them of it, and

to forewarn them of the frightful doom which was impending. He was the prophet of unwelcome truth. He had to face the facts of an age of retribution. He had to tear away the illusions with which people were deceiving themselves. *Phelps.*

JEREMIAH, CHAPTERS II., III. 1-5.

2 : 1, 2 AND the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals ; how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel *was* holiness unto the LORD, the firstfruits of his increase : all that devour him shall be held guilty ; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.

4 Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel : thus saith the LORD, What unrighteousness have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain ? Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt ; that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought and of the shadow of death, through a land that none passed through, and where no man dwelt ? And I brought you into a plentiful land, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof ; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.

8 The priests said not, Where is the LORD ? and they that handle the law knew me not : the rulers also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit. Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead. For pass over to the isles of Kittim, and see ; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently ; and see if there hath been such a thing. Hath a nation changed *their* gods, which yet are no gods ? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For my people have committed two evils ; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. Is Israel a servant ? is he a homeborn *slave* ? why is he become a prey ? The young lions have roared upon him, and yelled : and they have made his land waste ; his cities are burned up, without inhabitant. The children also of Noph and Tahpanhes have broken the crown of thy head. Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way ? And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Shihor ? or what hast thou to do in the way to Assyria, to drink the waters of the River ? Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee : know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and a bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the LORD, the LORD of hosts. For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands ; and thou saidst, I will not serve ; for upon every high hill and under every green tree thou didst bow thyself, playing the harlot. Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed : how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me ? For though thou wash thee with lye, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the LORD God. How canst thou say, I am not defiled, I have not gone after the Baalim ? see thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done : *thou art* a swift dromedary traversing her ways ; a wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind in her desire ; in her occasion who can turn her away ? all they that seek her will not weary themselves ; in her month they shall find her. Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from

thirst : but thou saidst, There is no hope : no ; for I have loved strangers, and after them
 26 will I go. As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed ;
 27 they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets ; which say to a stock,
 Thou art my father ; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth : for they have turned
 their back unto me, and not their face : but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise,
 28 and save us. But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee ? let them arise, if they can
 save thee in the time of thy trouble : for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods,
 O Judah.

29 Wherefore will ye plead with me ? ye all have transgressed against me, saith the LORD.
 30 In vain have I smitten your children ; they received no correction : your own sword hath
 31 devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion. O generation, see ye the word of the LORD.
 Have I been a wilderness unto Israel ? or a land of thick darkness ? wherefore say my people,
 32 We are broken loose ; we will come no more unto thee ? Can a maid forget her ornaments,
 33 or a bride her attire ? yet my people have forgotten me days without number. How trim-
 mest thou thy way to seek love ! therefore even the wicked women hast thou taught thy
 34 ways. Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the innocent poor : I have not
 35 found it at the place of breaking in, but upon all these. Yet thou saidst, I am innocent ;
 surely his anger is turned away from me. Behold, I will enter into judgement with thee,
 36 because thou sayest, I have not sinned. Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy
 37 way ? thou shalt be ashamed of Egypt also, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria. From him
 also shalt thou go forth, with thine hands upon thine head : for the LORD hath rejected thy
 confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.

3 : 1 They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another
 man's, shall he return unto her again ? shall not that land be greatly polluted ? But thou
 2 hast played the harlot with many lovers ; yet return again to me, saith the LORD. Lift up
 thine eyes unto the bare heights, and see ; where hast thou not been lien with ? By the
 ways hast thou sat for them, as an Arabian in the wilderness ; and thou hast polluted the
 3 land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness. Therefore the showers have been
 withholden, and there hath been no latter rain ; yet thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou re-
 4 fusedst to be ashamed. Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the
 5 guide of my youth ? Will he retain *his anger* for ever ? will he keep it to the end ? Behold,
 thou hast spoken and hast done evil things, and hast had thy way.

Chap. 2. This chapter and the first five verses of the third constitute one message. Unlike most of Jeremiah's special messages, this stands without date. In favor of dating it among the very earliest of his prophecies, say in the thirteenth year of Josiah (1 : 2 and 25 : 3), are its location first in order in the book ; the implied apostasy of the people from God, which is such as the very long and very wicked reign of Manasseh must have induced ; and the adaptation of such a message from the Lord's prophet to promote the great reformation which the good Josiah commenced in earnest but one year previously. H. C.

The prophecy begun in this chapter is continued to the end of the fifth verse of the next chapter. In it God professes to retain the same kindness and favorable disposition toward Israel which He had manifested in their earlier days. He expostulates with them on their ungrateful returns for His past goodness ; and shows that it was not want of affection in Him, but their own extreme and unparalleled wickedness and

disloyalty, which had already subjected and would still subject them to calamities and misery. He concludes with a pathetic address, exhorting them to return to Him, with an implied promise of acceptance. *Blayney.*

1-3. The Lord tacitly compares His own covenant relation to the Jews with that most tender and precious of all human relations, the marriage state. Then, with a happy allusion to the warmth of interest and affection common to the recently betrothed or wedded, he says, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy betrothal"—*i.e.*, the love shown by the people when they followed His leadings through that ancient wilderness of Sinai. These great truths—the nation protected while obedient, and, when disobedient, unprotected and scourged, with impunity to their chastisers—fill out the whole history of the covenant people. We may fitly note how beautifully and winningly this reference to the early love existing between the Lord and His covenant people stands at the head of the expostulations

and rebukes that so largely fill this Book of Jeremiah. The Lord would have them understand how gladly He would welcome the nation back to the early warmth of their love, and no less to the eternal warmth of His ! H. C.

2. Behold the similitude of marriage to the union between Christ and the Church ! This latter relation, also, is that of a union based on *covenant* ; on a mutual engagement to fidelity between the contracting parties. This sacred union has its day of *espousals* in the present life. The marriage to which it looks forward is to be celebrated, in solemn and royal state, on the morning of the greatest day of days. And the parties who here enter into this holy state of covenant are regarded by the Bible as already one ; that is, as united in a bond which supposes a common love, which creates a common interest, and which, spiritually understood and discharged, looks forward to a common destiny. J. S. Stone.

3. God appropriated them to Himself ; though they were a sinful people, yet by virtue of the covenant made with them, and the Church set up among them, they were "holiness to the Lord," dedicated to His honor, and taken under His special tuition : they were the "first-fruits of His increase," the first constituted Church He had in the world ; they were the first-fruits, but the full harvest was to be gathered from among the Gentiles. The "first-fruits of the increase" were God's part of it, were offered to Him, and He was honored with them ; so were the people of the Jews ; what little tribute, rent and homage God had from the world He had it chiefly from them ; and it was their honor to be thus set apart for God. This honor have all the saints ; they are the "first-fruits of His creatures" (James 1 : 18). H.

The spiritual plan of God in the earth is to bring men into holiness, and happiness that springs from holiness, through fellowship with His own Spirit incorporated with His Son and revealed by His Holy Ghost. For that He preserved the race after it had fallen ; for that He sent prophet and seer and songster ; for that He sent His Son into the world that He might make men partakers of His holiness—not of an austere and rigorous morality merely, not of sentimental holiness merely—of His holiness, sweet and tender and mighty. That He might make men partakers of that holiness Christ came into the world, and for the same end the Spirit comes, and for the same end the Church exists. R. S. S.

4-6. The fathers of the generation then liv-

ing had begun this fearful apostasy from their God into idolatry, and now God appeals to their children to say if it were for any fault of His, and if any, for what ? They, not God, had broken covenant. Could they charge any wrong upon Him ? What perverse thing had He ever done to justify them in turning aside at all from the path of humble, honest obedience ? What had their God done that they should turn away from Him to go after mere wind and emptiness, and become so utterly foolish ? This last phrase—"walking after vanity and becoming vain"—occurs somewhat frequently. It most fitly describes the supreme folly and guilt of turning from the living God to dead idols, mere nothings, unsubstantial as a puff of air.

7-11. The same course of thought continues—the manner of address changing from the third person to the second—passing from speaking of the fathers to speaking directly to the children then living, and then addressed by the prophet in the name of the Lord. It is a remarkable, strong and clear showing in the light of reason, that His priests and people were utterly foolish and fearfully guilty. H. C.—They had with idolatry introduced all manner of wickedness. When they entered into the good land which God gave them, they defiled it by defiling themselves, and disfitting themselves for the service of God. It was God's land ; they were but tenants to Him, sojourners in it (Lev. 25 : 23). It was His heritage, for it was a holy land, Immanuel's land ; but they "made it an abomination" even to God Himself, who was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel. H.

12, 13. The thing so revolting and so horrible in the eye of reason is that God's people forsake Him and go after false, idol gods instead. For God is a fountain of blessings, never failing, ever pure, flowing abundantly and freely, meeting every want most perfectly, and bearing a glorious wealth of good to His people ; yet they spurn this fountain and set themselves to hew out worthless cisterns that cannot hold water, whose waters are soon foul, and their supply sure to fail in the day of real need. To get the full force of this figure we may think of an Oriental, half-torrid climate on a wild, parched Arabian desert, where water is the first necessity of human existence—where half the year is rainless, and the miserable sojourners are fain to betake themselves to building cisterns as a last resort for sustaining life. Under such circumstances, no man not positively insane could be so senseless and foolish

as to forsake a fresh, perennial fountain to toil over a frail, uncertain cistern. It is only in religion that men, otherwise intelligent and sensible, make themselves fools! Oh, might they only consider that it is infinitely better to come to God, the great Fountain of all good, and live in Him, than to repel His love and care, and perpetrate the folly of toiling at one's own cistern, in the vain hope of living independently of God! Alas, that men in all ages are so slow to learn that God is a fountain of unmeasured blessedness! Taken together, these strongest terms in the language show how intensely amazed all the holy in heaven are at the monstrous folly of human sinning. That when men *might* have the infinite God for their Friend, they choose to have Him their enemy; that when they *might* have Him their exhaustless portion of unmeasured and eternal good, they spurn Him away, and set themselves to the fruitless task of making some ruinous substitute; this is beyond measure amazing! Verily, sin is a mockery of human reason! H. C.

Broken cisterns the people of Israel seem to have known only too well. Dr. Thomson says there are thousands such in Upper Galilee, which, though dug in hard rock and apparently sound, are all dry in winter; at best they are an uncertain source of supply, and the water, when collected, is bad in color and taste, and full of worms. The whole action, then, of the character here indicated is scarcely conceivable, unless as the expression of fear in a diseased mind. In somewhat of this way we have heard of men acting, who, after having made great fortunes, have become victims to the horrid delusion that they are paupers, and must make some sort of provision against utter destitution. So we might imagine the victim of delusion, with fountains all round him, still insisting upon having some sort of cistern provided. Note, moreover, that the aspect of folly becomes more decided when we consider that it is *water* which is treated in this way. The water which is offered so freely and continuously in the fountain is a thing which man *needs*, and yet it is for the supply of that which is a great and may be a painful need that he is represented as depending on broken cisterns which with great toil he has constructed for himself. P. C.

Travellers tell us that sometimes they find the path leading to the fountain of the desert strewn with the bones of those who have perished from thirst. They even find skulls, whitened and bleached, bending over the very edge of the fountain. Why? The men dying with thirst discovered that the cistern was bro-

ken and empty. Christ is not a broken cistern. The world is. Human philosophy is. Christ is a fountain of life full and inexhaustible. Gregg.

Although man has forsaken God, the fountain of living water, he has not given up the *desire* for something to satisfy the thirst of his spirit. He seeks light for the mind, love for the heart, peace for the soul; he seeks honor and glory. He is not content with existence; he *wishes* to live; he wants fulness of life, vigorous, joyous, long-enduring. He still *wants* water, though he has left God. This it is which he seeks in broken cisterns. And yet God is the only fountain of living water. Saphir.

Many are content that God should be their happiness in *another* world, who will not take Him as such *in this*. Here they have other objects of pursuit, which engross their time and captivate their affections. They want not God. Their service is for what they may get *from Him*, not for what they find *in Him*. They are ever setting up this or that vanity, idolizing the creature, and saying to it, "Thou shalt be a god to me," while they turn away from the uncreated spring of blessedness. So God complains of His people by the prophet, "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." And alas! the foolish hearts, even of His own children, are ever prone to do the same—to look elsewhere for satisfying good, and set their affections upon that which is not. Many a rod which falls heavy in the providence of God brings this message along with it, "I will be to you a God." In this way, as well as by direct communications of Himself in goodness to the soul, winning its affections and charming it away from created good, does God teach His people to take Him as their all—their present, as well as their everlasting portion. Goodé.

19. It was scarcely necessary that God should Himself reprove them. Their own sins reprovéd and rebuked them so manifestly that they had only to look at the case to see that their forsaking God was all wrong, bitterly and ruinously so, even against themselves. H. C.

"Thine own wickedness shall correct thee; and then it is impossible to save thee; know and see therefore, upon the whole matter, that it is an evil thing that thou hast forsaken God, for that is it that makes thine enemies enemies indeed, and thy friends friends in vain." The nature of sin is "forsaking the Lord" as our God; it is the soul's alienation from Him

and aversion to Him. Cleaving to sin is leaving God. The cause of sin is because "His fear is not in us." It is for want of a good principle in us, particularly for want of the fear of God; this is at the bottom of our apostasy from Him; therefore men forsake their duty to God, because they stand in no awe of Him, nor have any dread of His displeasure. Sin is "an evil thing" and a "bitter." Sin is an evil thing that has no good in it; an evil that is the root and cause of all other evil; it is evil indeed, for it is not only the greatest contrariety to the Divine nature, but the greatest corruption of the human nature. It is "bitter;" a state of sin is the "gall of bitterness," and every sinful way will be "bitterness in the latter end;" the wages of it is death, and death is bitter. Sin, as it is in itself evil and bitter, so it has a direct tendency to make us miserable: "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee;" not only destroy and ruin thee hereafter, but correct and reprove now; they will certainly bring trouble upon thee; the punishment will so inevitably follow the sin that the sin shall itself be said to punish thee. Nay, the punishment, in its kind and circumstances, shall so directly answer to the sin, that thou mayest read the sin in the punishment; and the justice of the punishment shall be so plain, that thou shalt not have a word to say for thyself, thy own wickedness shall convince thee and stop thy mouth forever, and thou shalt be forced to own that "the Lord is righteous." The use and application of all this: "Know therefore, and see it, and repent of thy sin, that so the iniquity which is thy correction, may not be thy ruin." H.

It is an evil thing and bitter. This is applicable to individuals as well as to nations. Life was not intended to be led inconsistently; one part in doing wrong, the other in being sorry for it. Uniform obedience is our Maker's demand; and whoever departs from it wilfully, though he may return, will assuredly be made to "know and see," one way or other, that "it is a thing evil and bitter, that he hath forsaken the Lord his God." *Abp. Secker.*

We sometimes speak of the hidings of God's countenance, as if it were a sovereign act, calling for implicit submission; when the cause should at least be sought for, and will generally be found, in some "secret thing" of indulgence, unwatchfulness or self-dependence. It was while David "kept silence" from the language of contrition that he felt the pressure of the heavy hand of his frowning

God; and may not the darkness, which has sometimes clouded our path, be the voice of our God: "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." *Bridges.*

21, 22. The Lord says that their sin cannot be washed out by any effort of theirs. The corruption had gone too deep. These verses show that the nation began its national life well, mainly right before God. But they had become utterly degenerate and incurably corrupt. H. C.

22. *For though thou wash thee with nitre.* Though thou endeavorest to wash away thy sins by the rites of expiation prescribed by the law, or practised by idolaters; though thou insistest upon thy own innocence and justification (verse 23), yet the "marks" or stains of thy sins will always appear in the sight of God till they are cleansed by a sincere repentance and reformation. *W. Louth.*

Although we allow that good works are merit, and that merit is atonement, where are the good works of the sinner, where is the merit of the man who, the more works he produces, is producing so many more sins? As soon might you hope to bleach the rocks of Siddydim white as snow by washing them with their own black bitumen, as hope to wash out sinful deeds with sinful deeds, old sins with new. For, alas! till a man is born from above, sin is his essence; selfishness, ungodliness, runs through all his actions, gives its pestilent aroma to his prayers, its darkening tincture to his tears. And though he could bathe his youthful years in the waters of a weeping and repentant manhood, or embalm his former sins in the virtues of his later life, after all, it would only be an Ethiopian washed in ink, impurity purged with more impurity; and in regard to the abortive attempt, Jehovah would say, "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take ever so much soap, yet is thine iniquity marked before Me, saith the Lord." *Hamilton.*

23, 24. This setting forth of the senseless and reckless intoxication of the people in idol worship is exceedingly caustic, and might well put them to shame. They had become *bestial*, and were no longer rational in the indulgence of their passion for idols. H. C.

23. *See thy way in the valley.* See how thou hast practised the grossest idolatry in the valley; alluding to those idolatrous acts which were practised in the valley of Hinnom. *Blayney.*—The horrible practice of the Jewish idol-

aters, in burning their sons and their daughters in the fire, effectually confuted their pretences to innocence, since this way of worship had been expressly forbidden by God (Lev. 20 : 2, etc.). *W. Lowth.*

25. The passage suggests that in many cases the plea of despair is not half honest. The heart takes it up simply as an apology for rushing headlong and madly into sin. To quiet conscience and to seem to lend some ear to reason, men try and even pretend to think there is no longer any hope from God, and hence that they may as well get all the good from sin they can while they can get any. The underlying impulse is given in our text, "*I have loved sin, and will follow it.*"

26-28. The whole people of Israel, both their civil and their religious leaders, are put to shame by their idols, it is so senseless and ridiculous to say to a wooden pillar (a "stock"), "Thou art my father," and to a stone, "Thou art my mother." They will come to shame yet more when in the hour of their need they shall call on these idols for help and get none. The Lord suggests to them to try the experiment of calling on these new gods for salvation in their calamity. *H. C.*

In the time of trouble they say, Save us. Calamity is the test. While things go well with the idolater he forgets God or consciously dishonors Him. But when he is overtaken with the consequences of his evil deeds he is not ashamed to call upon God. The unreasonableness and inconsistency of this conduct are no barrier to it. Beneath the unbelief and worldliness of men there is a tacit belief in the goodness and power of God. In prosperity they are idolaters, in adversity they find their way back to the God they had despised. This is the universal and permanent inconsistency of the world life. *P. C.*

27. Turned the back to Me. What is the opposite of conversion? It is a terrible word, because God is our only Good, our Hope, our All; but it is, you know, *aversion*. If we are not turned to God, we are turned away from Him. It is a terrible word, because it is so outspoken, so true, and God is so good. Yet God tells us plainly what we are doing. But is it not so true? Is there any thought which men so try to get rid of, unless they are obeying Him, as the thought of God? For it is the thought of a Master who is disobeyed, a Father who is dishonored, a Benefactor to whom we are ungrateful, an Almighty who is defied, an Indweller who is chased away, a Judge who can punish. It speaks of engage-

ments broken, duties violated, conscience silenced. *Pusey.*

28. It is the sin of His people that provokes Him, instead of looking favorably upon them, to have *His eyes upon them for evil and not for good*, as He threatens (Amos 9 : 4); and therefore, without putting away of that, prayer is lost breath, and doth no good. They that still retain their sins and will not hearken to His voice, what can they expect but that the Lord, in holy scorn, in the day of their distress, should send them for help and comfort to those things which they have made their gods, and preferred before Him in their trouble? *They will say, Arise and save us; but where are the gods that thou hast made? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble.* *Leighton.*

30. Chastisement had done them no good. It had utterly failed to impress any just sense of their sin, or even to induce serious thought. No moral state possible to a moral being can be more alarming than this—to be so hardened that discipline, adapted for correction and improvement, proves utterly unavailing for any good, and only serves to aggravate the sinner's obduracy and strengthen his committal of heart against God. *H. C.*

In vain have I smitten your children. The design of God's judgments is men's reformation: and where they do not attain this end, it shows that such a people are incorrigible. The people of Judea were so far from "receiving correction," and turning God's chastisements to their own improvement, that they put to death the prophets who, in God's name, reproved them and exhorted them to repentance. *Blayney.*

35. Such was their strange moral blindness, that though they had murdered the faithful prophets of God, and thus innocent blood was found upon them, yet they supposed themselves quite innocent, and thought that God's anger had all passed away. *H. C.*

37. Why the confidences of men do not prosper. The people of Israel are set forth, even within the limits of this one chapter, as having multiplied and extended their confidences; and yet it could not be said that they were prospering. Men with the religious element in their nature strongly clamoring for satisfaction had turned to the gods of neighboring nations, and multiplied these objects of worship until it could be said, "According to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah." God compares them to thirsty people who, with a copious fountain in their midst, work and

toil to make cisterns, only to find that the end of their labor is in broken cisterns which can hold no water. And then, when their broken cisterns had proved quite unavailing, they fly to drink of Nile and of Euphrates. Evidently their confidence had not prospered, and a continuance and increase of adversity was threatened, the cause of it all being that their confidences were such as God, in His righteousness and majesty, must inevitably reject. P. C.

Chap. 3. In this chapter, verses 1-5 are connected with chap. 2, with its last two verses very closely, and in general with the strain of the chapter. At verse 6 commences another message, definitely dated in the reign of Josiah.

1. Wonderfully God's mercy toward His treacherous, ungrateful bride is so great that He still invites her to return, even though she has gone away and played the harlot with many lovers. The reference to the Hebrew law and the current sentiments of men is designed to set forth in a more striking light the greatness of God's forgiving love toward His apostate people.

4, 5. The two questions respecting God's keeping anger forever, probably assume that God is so merciful that He may be expected to forgive, and not keep His anger forever against themselves, now that they are professing repentance. The object in this passage is to rebuke the people for relapsing so soon and so utterly after such fair professions of repentance, made withal in words so just and suitable. Hengstenberg renders the passage: "Hast thou not but lately called me, Friend of my youth art thou? Will He reserve His anger forever? Will He keep it to the end? Behold, so spakest thou, and soon thou didst evil; thou didst accomplish it." H. C.

4. **My Father.** Thou art my Father, I will leave Thee to give me what is best. I am a very child, weak and ignorant; be Thou a Father, and a Guide, and a help to me. Thou art my Father; I will not fear to go to Thee, since Thou wilt not cast off Thy child. Thou art my Father, Thou hast therefore a right to correct me, and I will bear with patience that which must needs be for my good. Denton.

God is as much the best as He is the greatest. The Father is the best of fathers. He is tenderness itself toward His children; and all His shaded measures with us are as truly con-

ceived in an exquisitely benignant spirit as are those other measures whose radiant faces pour delight on all eyes. Burr.—The child of God is pleased with everything that happens, because he knows it could not happen unless it had first pleased God, and that which pleases Him must be the best. He is assured that no new thing can befall him, and that he is in the hands of a Father who will prove him with no affliction that resignation cannot conquer or that death cannot cure. Colton.

A call to the young. We need not hesitate so far to turn these words aside from their original meaning as to regard them as a Divine appeal to the young; especially if we understand that the prophet is here calling on Judah to return to the freshness of her "youth;" that "at this time" this hopeful reign of the good King Josiah, she should renew her covenant with Jehovah and the "love of her espousals" (chap. 2:2). In the days of youth the heart is most freely open to Divine influences, and it may be expected to respond readily to such an appeal as this. Note, 1. *The deepest truth of religion is the Fatherhood of God.* That He is the Father of our spirits is the basis of His claims upon us. The quality of our religious thought, the drift of our religious opinions, the tone of our religious life, depend very greatly on our faith in this truth. Fatherhood is our highest conception of God, and includes within it all aspects of His being, and all the relations He sustains toward us. This crowns them all, embraces all. We cannot rise above and beyond it. Our ideas are essentially defective if we fall short of it. Not that the actual human fatherhood worthily represents it; that, at its best, is but a marred and broken copy—a feeble, distant reflection—of the Divine. And yet the essential elements remain in spite of accidental faults. Power, wisdom, love, judicial authority, kingly rule, protective tenderness—these are the attributes of its ideal. And from the human, with all its imperfections and perversions, we rise to the Divine. 2. *The apprehension of this sacred relationship is specially befitting the season of youth.* What more natural than that young people should think of God as their Father; that this idea of Him should give shape and coloring to all their other religious ideas, and blend with all their views of life, and all their impressions of personal duty? P. C.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTERS III. 6-25; IV.

3:6 MOREOVER the LORD said unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. And I said after she had done all these things, She will return unto me; but she returned not: and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw, when, for this very cause that backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a bill of divorcement, yet treacherous Judah her sister feared not: but she also went and played the harlot. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that the land was polluted, and she committed adultery with stones and with stocks. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not returned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD. And the LORD said unto me, Backsliding Israel hath shewn herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; I will not look in anger upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD. Return, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am a husband unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: and I will give you shepherds according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD; neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall *that* be done any more. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the stubbornness of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I gave for an inheritance unto your fathers. But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of the nations? and I said, Ye shall call me My father; and shall not turn away from following me. Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD. A voice is heard upon the bare heights, the weeping *and* the supplications of the children of Israel; for that they have perverted their way, they have forgotten the LORD their God. Return, ye backsliding children, I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we are come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God. Truly in vain is *the help that is looked for* from the hills, the tumult on the mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel. But the shameful thing hath devoured the labour of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. Let us lie down in our shame, and let our confusion cover us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day: and we have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.

4:1 If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, unto me shalt thou return: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not be removed; and thou shalt swear, As the LORD liveth, in truth, in judgement, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.

3 For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury go forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings. Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry aloud and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the fenced cities. Set up a standard toward Zion: flee for safety, stay not; for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction. A lion is gone up from his thicket, and a destroyer of nations; he is on his way,

he is gone forth from his place ; to make thy land desolate, that thy cities be laid waste, without inhabitant. For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl : for the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us. And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the LORD, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes ; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder. Then said I, Ah, Lord God ! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace ; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul. At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A hot wind from the bare heights in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse ; a full wind from these shall come for me : now will I also utter judgements against them. Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as the whirlwind : his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us ! for we are spoiled. O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thine evil thoughts lodge within thee ? For a voice declareth from Dan, and publisheth evil from the hills of Ephraim : make ye mention to the nations ; behold, publish against Jerusalem, *that* watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah. As keepers of a field are they against her round about ; because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the LORD. Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee ; this is thy wickedness ; for it is bitter, for it reacheth unto thine heart.

My bowels, my bowels ! I am pained at my very heart ; my heart is disquieted in me ; I cannot hold my peace ; because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried ; for the whole land is spoiled ; suddenly are my tents spoiled, *and* my curtains in a moment. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet ? For my people is foolish, they know me not ; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding : they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.

I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was waste and void ; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved to and fro. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful field was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, *and* before his fierce anger. For thus saith the LORD, The whole land shall be a desolation ; yet will I not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black : because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and I have not repented, neither will I turn back from it. The whole city fleeth for the noise of the horsemen and bowmen ; they go into the thickets, and climb up upon the rocks : every city is forsaken, and not a man dwelleth therein. And thou, when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do ? Though thou clothest thyself with scarlet, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou enlarge thine eyes with paint, in vain dost thou make thyself fair ; *thy* lovers despise thee, they seek thy life. For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, that gaspeth for breath, that spreadeth her hands, *saying*, Woe is me now ! for my soul fainteth before the murderers.

3:6. The Lord said also unto me.

Here begins an entire new section or distinct prophecy, which is continued to the end of the sixth chapter. This prophecy consists of two distinct parts. The first part contains a complaint against Judah, for having exceeded the guilt of her sister Israel, whom God had already cast off for her idolatrous apostasy (verses 6-12). The prophet is hereupon sent to announce to Israel the promise of pardon upon her repentance, and the hopes of a glorious restoration in aftertimes, which are plainly marked out to be the times of the Gospel, when the Gentiles

themselves were to become a part of the Church (verses 12-21). The children of Israel, confessing and bewailing their sins, have the same comfortable assurances as before repeated to them (verse 22 ; chap. 4 : 2). In the second part, which begins chap. 4 : 3, and is prefaced with an address to the people of Judah and Jerusalem, exhorting them to prevent the Divine judgments by a timely repentance, the Babylonian invasion is clearly and fully foretold, with all the miseries which would attend it ; and the universal and incorrigible depravity of the people is represented at large, and

pointed out as the justly provoking cause of the national ruin. *Blayney.*

6-11. The date was "in the days of Josiah," who set on foot a blessed work of reformation, in which he was hearty, but the people were not sincere in their compliance with it; to reprove them for that, and warn them of the consequences of their hypocrisy, is the scope of that which God here said to the prophet, and which He "delivered to them." The case of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah is here compared—the "ten tribes" that revolted from the throne of David and the Temple of Jerusalem, and the "two tribes" that adhered to both. The distinct history of those two kingdoms we have in the two books of the Kings, and here we have an abstract of both, as far as relates to this matter. *H.*

The passage (verses 6-11) brings the case of Israel, the ten tribes, to the notice of Judah, that the latter may observe the sins of her sister and her consequent punishment, and learn hence her own greater sin and sorer doom. For in Judah God had made Himself far more fully known. Repeatedly had pious kings and faithful prophets called the people back to God, and repeatedly had they professed repentance and solemnly renewed their covenant with the Lord. But as often they had turned back again to their loved idols, worse than ever, so that treachery had signally marked their national character. This was their damning sin. They would not keep faith with their God. It is for the sake of making this strong feature of their guilt specially prominent, that this comparative view of the two nations is taken here. *H. C.*

7. Her treacherous sister Judah saw it. The two kingdoms of Israel and Judah are described as sisters in iniquity. The same metaphor is applied to Samaria and Jerusalem, the two capitals (Ezek. 23:4, etc.). The word "treacherous" properly denotes a wife unfaithful to her husband. (See verse 20.) *W. Louth.*

11. Israel and Judah are both shamefully wicked; and yet, of the two, Judah is worse than Israel: her treachery is so much more, as she had more favors from Me. *Bp. H.*—She sinned against greater convictions, and would not take warning by that desolation which God brought on the whole kingdom of Israel for their idolatries. (Cf. Ezek. 16:51.) *W. Louth.*

12-19. Here is a great deal of Gospel in these verses, both that which was always Gospel—God's readiness to pardon sin and to re-

ceive and entertain returning repenting sinners—and those blessings which were in a special manner reserved for Gospel times, the forming and founding of the Gospel Church by bringing into it the "children of God" that were scattered abroad, the superseding of the ceremonial law and the uniting of Jews and Gentiles, typified by the uniting of Israel and Judah in their return out of captivity. *H.*

12-14. The address here is properly to Israel of the ten tribes, "backsliding" having been her distinctive epithet throughout this entire passage. (See verses 6, 8, 11, 12.) At the same time the *spirit* of the promise makes it equally good for the people of Judah, the Jews. Verse 18 declares that Judah shall come *with Israel* to the enjoyment of these great Gospel blessings. Israel is put foremost (as in this antithesis throughout) because her guilt had really been relatively less than that of Judah, and the Lord would fain move Judah to jealousy by the force of this contrast in both guilt and promised blessings. "I am married to you" means I cheerfully recognize my relation of husband to you; and, in the true spirit of this relation, I come now to solicit your returning love and the reconsecration of your heart to Me.

15. "Pastors according to Mine heart." Tracing this phrase historically to the circumstances out of which it grew, we come to the pious kings who led the people, not to idols, but to the true God. In its prophetic outlook into Gospel times, it must have its fulfilment mainly in Christian teachers of Gospel truth. David was the model shepherd of the Lord's flock—"after Mine own heart." (See 1 Sam. 13:14.) All faithful and true pastors are *from the Lord*. *H. C.*—Those are pastors after God's own heart who make it their business to feed the flock, not to "feed themselves and fleece the flocks," but to do all they can for the good of those that are under their charge; who "feed them with wisdom and understanding," wisely and understandingly. Those who are not only pastors, but teachers, must feed them with the Word of God, which is wisdom and understanding, which is able to make us wise to salvation. *H.*

We believe in the Divine *commission*, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." We believe in the Divine *assurance*, "Lo, I am with you all the days to the end of the world." We believe in the Divine *victory*, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." And our faith is turned into supplication. Let us forget all but that charge, that presence, that redemption. There must be in

the outward life checks, lonelineses, defects. We cannot always keep at the level of our loftiest thoughts. Yet the words shall have fulfilment, "from strength to strength." "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man who putteth his trust in Thee!" *Westcott's Ordination Sermon to Bp. Lightfoot.*

Let us look into the New Testament and distinguish, if we can, what is called preaching there. And we find our apostle testifying, "Whom we preach, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." He does not say *about* whom, or the just account and formula of whom, but *whom*; the fact-form man, the life, and life history, and feeling, and sorrow, and death, and resurrection of the man. "Whom we preach"—that is, cry, proclaim, publish as good tidings, set forth as a fact-matter news or story—the word is not theologize, resolve, reduce, but *preach*. The souls to be gained are also to be presented "perfect in Christ Jesus"—that is, in the new possibilities and powers of grace embodied for them in the face and person, or personal life, of their incarnate Redeemer. *Bushnell.*

Once the descriptive term for God's ministers was, "*They wait at the altar*;" now the descriptive term for God's ministers is, "*They preach the Gospel*." This is a contrast in which there is untold significance. Then, the Lord's priests sacrificed for His people; now His people are themselves a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God by Jesus Christ; and His ministers are helpers of their faith, exhorting and testifying of Christ, and of the true grace of God wherein we stand. Then, the words priest, altar and sacrifice had a primary and real significance; now, when used, they can only have a secondary meaning, sufficient, indeed, to show the reality of the blessings which they indicate, but in no way either interfering with or supplementing the office and work of Him who is our true Priest, Altar and Sacrifice. Then, they who ministered in holy things had to show the necessity of a work to be done; the work of reconciliation was committed to God's priests, that they might set it forth by types and symbols; but now, they who minister in holy things have to testify to the work of Christ already done; and, consequently, the apostle tells us, that to us, Christ's ambassadors, is committed the *word* of reconciliation. The *work* is in Christ's hands alone. It could be trusted in no other hands but His. It is honor enough for His ministers to be trusted with the *word*, the testimony concerning our Master and His finished work. *Cadman.*

The effective preacher is a man of extensive knowledge, not a novice. He has clear and comprehensive views of truth. His mind is filled with its illuminations. He is a man of deep experience; his heart is pervaded with the spirit and power of truth. He is a man of benevolence; his soul is filled with intense desires to achieve, by his instrumentalities, those grand purposes of love for which the truth was given. He is a man of logic and of feeling; he can prove his points, and press them. He is a man of simplicity, who aims to be understood; a man of intention, who aims to be felt. He clothes his message in garments of light, imbues it with the energies of emotion, adjusts it to the sensibilities of the heart; points and pours it into the drowsy chambers of the conscience. He is a man of taste; he can soar if he pleases; write and speak with a winning beauty and a chastened elegance. He is a man of boldness, and is not afraid, in distinctness and strength, to utter the whole truth—all doctrine, all duty, whoever may hear or whoever may forbear. He is a man of independence, his rules are his own, gathered from all proper sources and incorporated with his habits of thought and feeling. He speaks in his own way, from the impulse of his own spirit, and in accordance with his own consciousness and good sense. He speaks not so much for beauty as for effect. The highest exertions of power are sometimes inconsistent with an exact and perfect finish. The sublime and resistless agents of nature are not accustomed to do things very precisely. The lightning does not stop to polish its shafts in its rending, scorching track. *George Shepard.*

No doubt the preacher should be as susceptible as any man to the interest which poetical and historical associations give to the Scriptures; but then these should have for him "no glory at all by reason of the glory that excelleth." When his mind is smitten with the revelation of those thoughts and ways of God which are as much higher than man's thoughts and ways as the heavens are above the earth, then, as an instrument of the Spirit of grace, he is invested with his proper power. He will perceive, as by a sacred instinct, how an utterance on any given page is related to the truths which shine from all the pages. He will know that if he seizes that relation, he has the mind of God in the specific utterance. When he is borne along in the direction of that, he may frequently have to declare things which fail to be popular and for the moment pleasing; but he will not fall into the condemnation of hav-

ing wasted the Sabbath hours, of having used the noble instrument of public discourse, with which he might have wielded over audiences the power of eternal truth, merely to freshen and set in some more striking combinations the fading things of time. *W. S. Karr.*

We are commissioned to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not simply in the gushing, superficial fervor of repeating His name and picturing His cross. Paul was determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified; but Paul's name is linked with fourteen doctrinal epistles, setting forth the logical principles of an intellectual Christianity. The cross of Calvary is the focus, but the rays of truth are radiated on every side. Our work is declarative. The range of need is broad; the range of truth is broad, and while Christ is the centre and Calvary is the core, yet we are to gather everywhere from the rich fields of truth that God has opened up, producing things new and old, and bring them to bear upon the hearts and lives of men, enriching their thoughts, ennobling their conditions, exalting their ideals and bringing them into harmony with the everlasting Father. *H. C. Minton.*

Everything costs which has any real worth; costs in proportion to its worth, and costs all it is worth. In scholarship only an alert and athletic discipline tells. Every faculty must be roused, informed and driven to do its best. How one man surpasses another is not always easily explained. Brains of course differ, both in volume and especially in fibre. Temperaments differ. Opportunities differ. But the final strategic secret is in the will. The best scholarship, other things being equal, waits always upon the most inflamed and steady purpose. In ancient Christian art Matthew was the man, Mark the lion, Luke the ox, and John the eagle. The symbolism is most suggestive. Christian scholarship must emulate them all. Insight, courage, endurance, aspiration—these are the four evangelists of a successful ministry. Omniscience has a joy of its own. But for the finite mind there can be no greater benediction than that of the endless search. *R. D. Hitchcock.*

The true preacher will not offer to God of that which costs him nothing, but takes pains beforehand with his sermons. Having brought his sermon into his head, he labors to bring it into his heart before he preaches it to his people; and surely that preaching which comes from the soul most works on the soul. The places of Scripture he quotes are pregnant and pertinent. The similes and illustrations are

always familiar, but never contemptible. In his opinion reasons are the pillars of the fabric of a sermon, but similitudes are the windows which give the best light. He provideth not only wholesome but plentiful food for his hearers. He makes not that wearisome which should be ever welcome; wherefore his sermons are of ordinary length, except on an extraordinary occasion. He counts the success of his ministry the greatest preferment. *Fuller.*

The single eye, the pure intention, the consideration of God's will, the love of His commandments, zeal for His glory, ardor in His service, affection toward His creatures, these are the grand and essential motives which God looks for in His ministers. *Bp. Jebb.*—An illustration and example of the spirit indicated, Dr. Thomas H. Skinner, of New York, near the end wrote thus to one of his own generation: "You and I are very near the end of our course. Could any angel have coveted a greater calling than that in which we have spent our days? Preaching to poor, perishing men the unsearchable riches of Christ! Blessed be God that *this*—not heaping up treasure on earth, not making ourselves a name among scholars, and the worldly wise, and great politicians, and place seekers—has been our occupation. I am constantly lamenting over my shortcomings, my little profiting by all my advantages and opportunities of serving my Lord, and my countless infirmities and sins; but notwithstanding all my drawbacks, I cannot but call on my soul and all that is within me to bless the Lord that I have been, here on earth, not a banker, or lawyer, or statesman, or prince; but a preacher of the everlasting Gospel. And I am sure that in this you are like me; and how should we rejoice together in the wonderful grace of God toward us, in this respect, if we could talk with each other of the ministry we have almost completed! Farewell! In the bonds of the everlasting covenant." *Thomas H. Skinner.*

16. The scope of the verse is that the ark, and much more surely all else with it belonging to the external forms and ceremonies of Judaism, will pass away, being superseded by what is altogether better and more glorious. *H. C.*—The ark of the covenant was the visible seat of God's residence among His people; it was therefore the object of their boast; but after the destruction of the first Temple, they had it no more. But to compensate this loss, they are told in the next verse that "Jerusalem should be called the throne of the Lord," to which not the Jews only, but "all the nations should be gathered." By Jerusalem is meant the Chris-

tian Church. (See Gal. 4 : 26 ; Rev. 21 : 2, 3.) The greater privileges of this latter would supersede all boast on account of those which had at any time belonged to the Jewish Church.

Blayney.—**Neither shall it come to mind ; neither shall they remember it.** Meaning, The Jews shall then be convinced that the ark and other parts of the Mosaic dispensation are abrogated by Christ and His Gospel, which they will then embrace. *Wells.*

18. The form of this language has led many to expect a literal restoration (yet future) of both Judah and Israel (the ten tribes) to their ancient land. Let it suffice to remark here, that while the ancient economy stood, demanding the concentration of the people within and around Jerusalem, and withstanding their diffusion among the nations of the earth, such a return would be a blessing ; that the Jews did in this manner return under Zerubbabel and with Ezra and Nehemiah ; that the use of such phraseology is accounted for by existing facts and the whole genius of that system ; but that when we pass over into the Christian age, all the great facts of the case are changed. Israel and Judah cannot return thither to set up Judaism again, as this very passage shows, and as the New Testament most abundantly proves ; that the genius of the Christian system demands diffusion and resists concentration—thus precisely reversing the genius, the aim and the work of the ancient dispensation ; and, finally, that Paul (Rom. 11), looking forward to the future of his countrymen under the triumphant sway of the Gospel in the latter days, has not a hint about their returning to their own land, but finds all these promises fulfilled in their being engrafted into God's Church again, and brought meekly and humbly to love and serve the living Saviour. Hence, for these main reasons, I cannot interpret this promise as involving the yet future restoration of Israel and Judah to their own land, but find in it the far higher and richer blessing that Paul found in it—their reception again into the bosom of the Christian Church, with a power upon Zion as that of life from the dead, that “so all Israel may be saved,” since “there shall come out of Zion a Deliverer, who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Rom. 11 : 15, 25, 26).

19. After such exceeding great and precious promises, nothing could be more appropriate than to show how the people could avail themselves of these blessings ; what they must be and must do to ensure them. Hence the remaining verses of this chapter bear directly to this point. Israel and Judah were united in

verse 18, and thenceforward through the chapter are one, under the common name Israel (verses 20, 21, 23), and are spoken of as both “treacherous” (verse 20) and “backsliding” (verse 22). The Lord raises the question : “How shall I put thee among the children ?” This question the Lord Himself answers : “Thou shalt call Me, My Father, and shalt not turn away from Me.” Truly this is the way : To return to God with humble faith in His parental love and with the filial spirit of a confiding child, and then to prove faithful evermore. These are the conditions of obtaining so great blessings. *H. C.*

He does Himself return answer to this question : “But I said, Thou shalt call Me, My Father.” God does Himself answer all the objections that are taken from our unworthiness, or they would never be got over. 1. That He may put returning penitents “among the children,” He will give them the “Spirit of adoption,” teaching them “to cry, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4 : 6). “Thou shalt call Me, My Father ; thou shalt return to Me, and resign thyself to Me as a Father, and that shall recommend thee to My favor.” 2. That He may “give them the pleasant land,” He will “put His fear in their hearts,” that they may never “turn from Him,” but may persevere to the end. *H.*

The conditions of adoption into the Christian Church, and of enjoying the privileges of the Gospel covenant, are expressly stated by Christ and His apostles to be the same as are here prescribed—viz., the profession of a true faith in God and uniform obedience for the time to come. “Thou shalt call Me, My Father ; and shalt not turn away from Me.” *Blayney.*

It is not mere condescension to the infirmity of man when God employs human language or human forms of speech to make His character known to us. There is just ground for it, in the nature of the case. It is not mere metaphor. It is in part literal and substantial truth. When He terms Himself our Father in heaven, it is not a mere figurative appellation. He is so in the strictest and fullest sense of the word. This word conveys an impressive and most consoling idea of what is truly the fact. Instead of its being an indication of the weakness of human speech, it is doubtful whether the dialect of angels could supply a better. *B. B. Edwards.*—In calling Himself *our Father*, God recalls to our mind the benefits of our creation, our preservation and redemption ; the blessing of adoption and of that sanctification which He has given to His children. *Denton.*

Adoption is the act of God, and not of faith ;

it is God that says, "How shall I put them among the children?" and again, "I will be their Father, and they shall be My sons and daughters." It is the work and business of faith to receive the blessing of adoption, which it could not do unless it had been previously provided in the mind and by the will of God, and in the covenant of His grace; for the reception of which Christ has made way by His redemption, one end of which is "that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:5)—that is, by faith; for God has appointed faith to be the general receiver of Christ, and of all the blessings of Grace through Him, and this among the rest; and to as many as receive Christ, He gives a power, authority, dignity and privilege to become the sons of God openly—that is, to claim this as their privilege and dignity; which claim is made by faith, but not the thing itself claimed; even to them that believe on His name, and who are described as regenerate persons, which is an evidence of their sonship, though not the thing itself; "who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12, 13). *John Gill.*

Adoption is evidenced by the renunciation of all former dependencies. When a child is adopted he relinquishes the object of his past confidence and submits himself to the will and pleasure of the adopter; so they who are brought into the family of God will evidence it by giving up every other object, so far as it interferes with the will and glory of their heavenly Father. "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" (Hos. 14:8.) "Other lords have had dominion over us; but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name" (Isa. 26:13). *Anon.*

Readoption is the guarantee of all highest blessings. It is only children of God who are heirs of God; if, then, we would enjoy the privileges and blessings of His house, we must be reinstated in that which we have lost. But this is only possible on repentance and belief. We are assured here and elsewhere that the sinner can regain this title and relation without lessening of the dignity, privilege and affection. When once this has taken place there is no bar to the bestowal of God's richest benediction. As His children, as those who are actuated by His love and governed by His Spirit, there is ample security that His blessings shall not be abused. A holy confidence and communion are established, and the true end of being is once more secured. *P. C.*

Amid all your conscious unworthiness, re-

member, *you are His children.* The soiled garments of earth which you may carry to the very portals of glory cannot alter a Father's feelings toward you, or lead Him to belie or forego His promises. If there be joy in heaven (and that joy deepest in the *Father's* heart) over the sinner in the hour of his *repentance*; what will be that joy in the hour of his glorification, when, stripped of his travel-worn, sin-stained raiment, all his truant wanderings, estrangements and backslidings at an end, he enters the threshold of the paternal home! *Macduff.*—Every time we are tempted to commit some sin, if we would stop and think, "I am now a child of God; shall a child of God, destined to wear Christ's image, stoop to be untrue or dishonest or impure or to cherish wrath or bitterness?" would we not turn away from the temptation? Could we sin against God with the consciousness of our high calling in our heart? *J. R. M.*

21-23. God hears their voice of penitence and sees their tears. They mourn on the high hills, where their great sins of idol worship have been committed, and He kindly invites their return, with the promise to heal their backslidings. They hear and respond, "Yea, Lord, with joy we come!" With glad hearts they now declare, Thou alone art the Lord our God! Our salvation is in Thee! *H. C.*

22. The invitation God gives them to return to Him: "Return, ye backsliding children." He calls them "children," in tenderness and compassion to them; foolish and froward as children, yet "His sons;" whom though He corrects He will not disinherit; for yet they are "children." *H.*—Though backslidden, yet He owns us as *children.* O Father, Thy love ever lives, though folly is in our ways. He calls in love, *Return.* He promises, "I will heal your backslidings;" I will freely and fully pardon them, though ever so numerous, heinous or aggravating, as though they had never been committed. *W. Mason.*

God calls on His people to return to Him. Not simple reformation of morals, but the restoration of personal relations with God as the Father of His people is desired. They are apostate children—*i.e.*, they are far from God, though they were once near to Him, and they are still His children. As sinners, men have all lost a first estate of innocence, but have not lost and can never lose their filial relationship to God. Hence the greatness of their guilt and the hope of their restoration. God invites and does not drive; He here exchanges threats for promises. God will heal, not simply receive His children. God alone can heal their apostasy.

sies. Man repents of sin, but God cures it. It is our part to turn from the evil, God's to destroy that evil. Sin is washed out, not by the tears of penitence, but by the blood of Christ. P. C.

24, 25. Verily the people have come to see their sins in their true light, as both most disgraceful and most ruinous. This course of thought really includes the first two verses of the next chapter, and may best be considered as addressed to the whole ancient Israel, without distinction between Israel and Judah. There is a beautiful pertinence in this sequel to those great promises in verses 14-18. H. C.

Chap. 4. The first two verses of this chapter ought not to have been separated from the foregoing; being spoken in reply to the confession of the people of Israel. *Blayney.*—This chapter is connected closely with the preceding, the first two verses, like the preceding context (3: 19-25), addressing Israel as a whole, without distinguishing Judah from the other tribes; while from verse 3 onward the prophet specially addresses Judah and Jerusalem, solemnly threatening the invasion by the terrible Chaldeans, and blending with this threatening repeated admonitions to deep searchings of heart and radical repentance.

1, 2. When Israel shall reverence her own God heartily and truly, other nations will be induced to believe in Him, and to count it their blessedness and their glory to have Him their God. Truly this is a word for God's people in every age, testifying that when they walk closely and humbly with God, their example and influence will be a power through God to the salvation of the wicked round about them.

3. Here the Lord turns His address from Israel in general to Judah and Jerusalem in particular. "Fallow ground" is that which requires ploughing, and is set apart to be ploughed, and not here (as in our modern phrase), what *has been* ploughed. The exhortation, "Prepare your ground for seed-sowing by putting in the plough and rooting out the thorns," means, in the moral sense, exterminate the evils of your hearts; break off your evil practices; make a thorough, radical change in your heart and life. H. C.—An unconvinced, unhumbled heart is like fallow ground, ground untilled, unoccupied. It is ground capable of improvement; it is our ground, let out to us, and we must be accountable for it; but it is fallow; it is unfenced, and lies common, it is unfruitful, and of no advantage to the owner, and (which is principally intended) it is overgrown with thorns and weeds,

which are the natural product of the corrupt heart, if it be not renewed with grace. Rain and sunshine are lost upon it (Heb. 6: 7, 8). H.

The life of every man is a process of spiritual husbandry. There is a true analogy between the soul of a man and the field in which a farmer sows his seed. In each case there are latent productive elements that may be turned either to good or evil according to the conditions of their development—capacities of indefinite improvement or of indefinite deterioration, of boundless fruitfulness or of boundless waste. The prolific virtue of the soil will nourish alike the germs of precious corn or of noisome weeds; and, whichever it be, the heavens above, by all the influences they shed down upon it, will promote the process. Thus will the faculties of our spiritual nature foster either the seeds of Divine excellence or of satanic corruption, and then all the laws to which our nature is subject, and all the associations of our life, will help to elaborate the issue, until we reap either a glad harvest of fruits that will endure forever, or one of shame and sorrow—thorns and weeds and briars fit only for the flames. P. C.

Fallow ground may not be utterly fruitless. Even the bramble bears its wholesome fruit, and good thoughts and good deeds spring up in the midst of heathen nations and irreligious people. God's Spirit has not wholly deserted any. But such fruit is poor compared with the fruit of cultivation, and the crop of it is thin. The good which still pertains to a neglected soul is imperfect, and small in the extreme compared with the good which would spring up in that soul under proper spiritual influences. The highest thought, the purest morality, the noblest effort, the largest charity, are only to be found where the spiritual life is cultivated by worship, instruction and discipline. P. C.

Hence we see that this admonition, whatever its first aspect of obscurity, is really a most important one for all of us. The exhortation is to nothing less than *thoroughness in spiritual culture*. Thoroughness in the cultivation of the heart, as a soil wherein the seeds of Divine truth are sown, pays in the highest sense of the word. The word through Jeremiah here is but the germ from which our Lord expounded His parable of the four kinds of soil. There is laid on each one of us a heavy burden—the stewardship of a human heart. And yet it is a precious and honorable burden. Far beyond the ripest, sweetest and most copious fruits of the soil beneath our feet, is the fruit that may come from within us. But the culture must be

thorough. True, that means toil, patience, watchfulness, discrimination; but what great work was ever done without them? P. C.

4. The moral significance of circumcision is putting away everything impure and unclean. "To this the Lord exhorts the people; else will His fury break forth like fire. H. C. — Even in the Pentateuch this initiatory rite of the covenant was shown to point to another circumcision, that of the lips and the heart, which in the future would become a great spiritual reality to all men. It is in this view of circumcision that Moses speaks of himself as of "uncircumcised lips"—that is, as unprepared for great spiritual work, while in Lev. 26:41 we read of "uncircumcised hearts," and in Deuteronomy the command to circumcise the heart is explained as equivalent to being "no more stiff-necked" (10:16). Quite in accordance with this view, Jeremiah expresses his call to repentance in the words before us. And that this was intended to point to something very real appears from the circumstance that it forms the great Divine promise of the latter days: "Jehovah thy God will circumcise thine heart . . . to love Jehovah thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul" (De. 30:6). Circumcision then was not a merely outward rite, but symbolic of a spiritual reality; and it pointed beyond itself to the time of its spiritual accomplishment. Accordingly we find that in the prophetic writings it is associated with the glory of the latter days. Thus Isaiah calls on the holy city to awake and put on her beautiful garments, for that henceforth the uncircumcised and the unclean would no more enter her gates. And that the outward rite could not have been referred to appears from this, that Jeremiah (9:26) foretells that the days would come when Jehovah would equally punish the circumcised with the uncircumcised, for that while the Gentiles were uncircumcised, "all the house of Israel were uncircumcised in the heart." A. E.

5, 6. These verses solemnly announce the near impending invasion by the Chaldeans. The people are summoned to assemble for protection in their strongly fortified cities, and especially in Jerusalem. This is the sense of "setting up a standard toward Zion," as a rallying point toward which the people should flee for safety. The word rendered "retire" (verse 6) means "hasten with your effects;" take what you value most, and fly in haste. "Evil from the north," in the usage of Jeremiah, means the Chaldean armies. (See 1:14, 15 and 24:9.) H. C.

6. **From the north.** Babylonia, Chaldea, Assyria and Media are constantly represented in Scripture as being to the north of Judea. Probably the prophets speak of the kings of Babylonia and Chaldea not so much with a view to their geographical situation, which is rather to the east of Palestine, as to the course which they took in their expeditions against Judea. The deserts of Arabia being not practicable for an army, they commonly crossed the Euphrates at Tiphshah, or Thapsacus, and approached Judea on the north side, by way of Damascus and Syria. *Culmet.*

7. **The lion is come up.** Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, whose monarchy is represented by a lion. He is called here "the destroyer of the Gentiles," or rather nations; Judea and all the neighboring countries being given up into his hands by God's decree. *W. Lowth.*

10. The next preceding verse refers to ungodly priests and false prophets. Through them the people had been greatly deceived, and the Lord had, in a sense, *permitted* these wicked agencies and their sad results. We need not assume that the prophet finds fault with God for what He had done. H. C. — The prophet takes care to remove all pretence of charging God by throwing the blame upon the people themselves. (See verse 18.) In one place "the sword" is said to "reach unto the soul;" in the other, the reason is assigned, because their "wickedness" had reached thither before. The people had been desperately wicked; would accept of no sober counsel nor bear any just reproof; they loved "smooth things;" they delighted in flattery and lies; they "walked after the imagination of their own hearts" (chap. 23:17); and therefore God gave them up to strong delusions, and suffered them to be grossly imposed on by lying prophets of their own choosing. In Scripture phrase, God is frequently said to do what He permits to be done, because all events are in His disposal and wait His pleasure. The device may be man's; but God directs it to better purposes than man could think of; and so, by taking the thing into His own hands, and governing the issue of it, He makes it, in a certain sense, His own. *Waterland.*

Our Lord refers more often than to any other Old Testament Scripture to that word of Isaiah's which tells of the Divine will, that "seeing, they [his enemies] may see and *not* perceive, and hearing, they may hear and *not* understand." Men who will not hear come at length to find they cannot. So with Judah and

Jerusalem ; they were at this time " given up to a strong delusion, that they should believe the lie"—that peace could be their lot in spite of what they were. We speak of Gospel-hardened men, and, alas ! we too often see such. And this is in keeping with God's law of habit—a law most beneficial to those who obey Him, but terrible in its effects on the disobedient. For separate actions crystallize into habits, whereby such actions, no matter what their character, become easy to us, and at last can be performed without any effort of our will. So that separate acts of obedience to God will at length become a blessed and holy habit of obedience, and separate acts of sin repeated again and again will become a direful habit of sin, from which we cannot break away. And because all this is in accordance with a Divine law, therefore God is said to harden men's hearts, to hinder their understanding of His word, to give them over to strong delusions and, as here, to " deceive the people." P. C.

13. These figures are plain ; they are also magnificent and appalling. In numbers that appeared as a cloud—His chariots dashing like the whirlwind—His horses swifter than the eagle ; the one thought that sinks into the heart is, We are lost ! Alas ! the nation is gone ; wasted, sacked, spoiled !

14. " O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thine evil thoughts lodge within thee ?" Reverting suddenly to their only source of hope and help—the thorough repentance of the people, the putting away of all their heart sins—he pertinently appends to his description of coming ruin this call to moral cleansing as their only salvation. " How long shall vain thoughts, deceitful, delusive hopes, find a quiet lodging-place in your souls ? Will you not open your eyes to your peril, and read here God's testimony against your sin and guilt ?" H. C. —The root of their corruption ; the evil thoughts that lodged within them and defiled their hearts, from which they must wash their hearts. Thoughts of iniquity or mischief, these are the evil thoughts of the evil heart, from which all other wickedness is produced (Matt. 15 : 19). These are our own, and they are most dangerous when they lodge within us, when they are admitted and entertained as guests and are suffered to continue." H.

The sins and miseries of human history are the plentiful harvest of a single evil thought lodged in the mind of Eve. No foundation of virtue so solid evil thoughts will not undermine ; no defence so impregnable they will not

overthrow ; no piety so sound they will not corrupt and ruin. We wonder as we read of crimes perpetrated by reputable persons, whose previous lives contradict them ; but we should cease to wonder if we could see how evil thoughts have eaten out the heart, leaving nothing but the shell. *Chapman.*—Use not your thoughts to take their liberty and be ungoverned ; for use will make them headstrong and not regard the voice of reason ; and it will make reason careless and remiss. Use and custom have great power on our minds ; where we use to go, our path is plain ; but where there is no use, there is no way. Where the water useth to run there is a channel. *Barter.*

The heart is determined by the thoughts ; as the thoughts, so the character ; the thoughts form the passions, the passions form the actions, the actions form the man. The thoughts are marked with an infinity of views and complexions, but it depends upon ourselves what thoughts we choose. The government of the thoughts is the government of the inward regions. A prince may possess the largest dominions and yet be the victim of his thoughts. *R. Hall.*

Thoughts are the expositors of the real condition of the heart, embodying those habits and displaying those passions which prudence or want of opportunity restrain from breaking forth into spoken or acted sin. They are a truer picture of ourselves than are our lives ; because we have neither the same temptation nor power to gloss them over with a fair appearance. The Christian, therefore, should have the mastery of his thoughts, as well as of his appetites, and be able to turn them to the service of God. *Bp. Jackson.*

The first beginning and hatching of any sin is first in the thoughts of the heart ; and if kings will have their servants in their accounts answer even for pence, why may not God call us to a reckoning even for our smallest debts ? And if men punish words and deeds, because they see and know them, why then should not God punish our thoughts, which He knows far better than any man can do our outward actions ? We must therefore make conscience of the idle roving of our brains ; our very thoughts and imaginations must stoop and do homage to God, who hath required of us to be loved with all our thoughts, and biddeth us tremble even at the very first rising of evil motions in our hearts, and sin not. *Dyke, 1642.*

Thoughts are the mutineers in the soul, which set open the gates for Satan ; he has held a secret intelligence with them, so far as he

knows them, ever since the fall ; and they are his spies to assist him in the execution of his devices. They prepare the tinder, and the next fiery dart sets all on a flame. Can we cherish these, if we consider that Christ died for them ? He shed His blood for that which put the world out of order, which was accomplished by the sinful imagination of the first man, and continued by evil imaginations. He died to restore God to His right and man to his happiness ; neither of which can be perfectly attained till those be thrown out of the possession of the heart. *Charnock*.

Unhallowed ambition may be replaced by the deepest humility. But unclean thoughts once harbored never leave the soul empty, and swept, and garnished. There is always a taint. *Anon.*—A man may commit the same sin a thousand times by renewing the pleasures of it in his thoughts. Though the act be past, yet as often as the mind runs over the passages and circumstances of the same sin, with the same delight, so often the soul is polluted with a new stain and laden with more guiltiness. *Anon.*

“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts.” The heart—the heart—there is the evil ! The imagination, which was given to spiritualize the senses, is often turned into a means of sensualizing the spirit. Beware of revery, and indulgence in forbidden images, unless you would introduce into your bosom a serpent, which will creep, and crawl, and leave the venom of its windings in your heart.

And now what is the remedy for this ? How shall we avoid evil thoughts ? First, by the fear of God—“Our God is a consuming fire.” Compare with this, “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” An awful thought ! a living God, infinitely pure, is conscious of your contaminated thoughts ! So the only true courage sometimes comes from fear. We cannot do without awe ; there is no depth of character without it. Tender motives are not enough to restrain from sin ; yet neither is awe enough. Love and hope will keep us strong against passion, as they kept our Saviour strong in suffering, “who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame.” Secondly, by the promises of God. Think of what you are—a child of God, an heir of heaven. Realize the grandeur of saintliness, and you will shrink from degrading your soul and debasing your spirit. *F. W. Robertson*.

Though we cannot keep evil thoughts from knocking at the door of our hearts, nor from entering in sometimes, yet we may forbear bidding them welcome or giving them entertainment. “How long shall evil thoughts lodge within thee ?” It is bad to let them sit down with us, though but for an hour, but it is worse to let them lie or lodge with us. *Swinnock*.—Though we cannot hinder them from haunting us, yet we may from lodging in us. The very sparkling of an abominable motion in our hearts is as little to be looked upon as the color of wine in a glass by a man inclined to drunkenness. Quench them instantly, as you would do a spark of fire in a heap of straw. We must not treat with them. Paul’s resolve is a good pattern, not to confer with flesh and blood. We do not debate whether we should shake a viper off our hands. *Charnock*.

Every man is responsible for the tenor of his thoughts. If not, there could be no room in this matter for remonstrance or appeal. The law of the association of ideas may be such that it is as impossible to prevent some particular thought from recurring to the mind as to stay the tide of the ocean ; but it is certainly possible for us to regulate our *habitual mental conditions*. It is given to us by watchful, prayerful self-discipline, especially by occupying the mind with higher and nobler things, to secure that the main drift of our thinking shall be in the right direction. We can choose our own fields of daily contemplation. Those thoughts will “lodge” in us which we most encourage and cherish, and for this we are accountable. It is impossible to measure the corrupting power of such thoughts. No evil imagination or purpose can enter the mind, and be allowed for a moment to dwell there, without leaving some moral stain behind it. Accustom yourself to any extent to the play of such influences, your whole being becomes contaminated by them, and

“The baseness of their nature
Shall have power to drag you down.”

Our minds cannot be in frequent contact with mean or grovelling objects of contemplation without finding that they poison all the streams of moral life within us. *W*.

The world must be very near us when the worldly thought is ever with us. Our best treasure must assuredly be there, else our heart and thought of our heart would not be always there. Thoughts that are *always* running on this world, on its hopes and fears, its gains and losses, its victories and defeats, are vain

thoughts ; and he that is wise will see betimes the peril and the danger with which they threaten the whole life of his soul, and will watch against them, as knowing that we may perish through things lawful as surely as through things unlawful. *Trench.*

15-17. Dan lay on the northern border of Palestine, so that the first tidings of the Chaldean irruption from the north would come from that quarter. So also Mount Ephraim lay north from Jerusalem. The "watchers that come from a far country" are besiegers who come to invest the city, and shut the people in on every side, and so *watch over* them to prevent their escape. Verse 17 plainly refers to their besieging the city, and gives the reason—the rebellion of Judah against her God. H. C.

18. The cause is clear. "Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee." It is from no decree of reprobation, from no predestination to sin, but from the inevitable action of the law of God which ordains that "ways" and "doings" such as Judah's were shall at length so utterly deceive those who are guilty of them that the most glaring falsehood is not too glaring for them to believe. P. C.

19. The cause of this great sorrow is the trumpet-blast for war—the Chaldean armies coming to desolate the land.

21, 22. The question "how long" involves the question "*why*." *Why* does this fearful calamity come at all on this goodly land? Verse 22 meets this question as from the mouth of the Lord Himself, who replies: "My people are wholly given up to the folly of sin and rebellion. They *act* as if they had never known Me. They are cunning and intelligent in doing evil, but have no wisdom, no sense to do good. Sin has terribly perverted their intellectual powers." This is the common law of sinning in its influence on the mind ; it blinds the intellect, and, as to all that is morally good, seems to rob it of reason and good sense, and subject it to the supreme dominion of folly. This moral state of the people is the reason why such fearful calamities fall on the whole land. Nothing can be more important than to announce this to the people again and again, for all hope of saving the nation lies in their heeding it. H. C.

23-26. The images under which the prophet represents the approaching desolation as foreseen by him present a most striking picture of a ruined country. The earth is brought back to its primitive state of chaos and confusion ; the cheerful light of the heavens is withdrawn, and succeeded by a dismal gloom ; the moun-

tains tremble and the hills shake under dreadful apprehensions of the Almighty's displeasure ; a frightful solitude reigns all around ; not a vestige is to be seen of any of the human race ; even the birds themselves have deserted the fields, unable to find any longer in them their usual food. The face of the country, in the once most fertile parts of it, now overgrown with briars and thorns, assumes the dreary wildness of the desert. The cities and villages are either thrown down and demolished by the hand of the enemy, or crumble into ruins, of their own accord, for want of being inhabited. *Blagney.*

27. "Yet will I not make a full end." *God's reserve of mercy.* This Divine resolve regarding the reserved remnant of the people of Judah and Jerusalem, who should be excepted from the desolation that was coming, is declared several times. Here in the text, then again in chap. 5 : 10 ; 30 : 11, and once again in chap. 46 : 28. And these are but the echo of what God said to Israel long ages before in the desert of Sinai, as we read in Lev. 26 : 44. And in other parts of Jeremiah's prophecies, and in the writings of all the prophets, this Divine resolve to mercifully reserve from destruction a portion of Israel is more or less plainly declared. Thus, then, God does not conceal that the end He makes will not be a full end. And there were many reasons why this fact should be declared. It would show that God was mindful of His covenant with their fathers ; that their "unfaithfulness could not make the faithfulness of God of none effect." The scoff of the unbeliever, the dismay of the true-hearted, would be alike prevented, for, by God's not making a full end, the way was yet plain for the accomplishment of all that He had spoken. Moreover, such declaration would sustain the faith of the faithful. They would see how they were not forgotten, that God's watchful care was over them, and that amid the coming desolations He would find means to deliver those who put their trust in Him. And the keeping open of this door of hope was calculated to persuade some to enter through that door, and so be saved. But while the oft-repeated words of the text refer mainly to Judah and Jerusalem, they really declare a principle of the Divine procedure, a continual law of His government and rule. God's way is, when making an end, not to make a full end. He has ever a reserve of mercy. P. C.

28. God's purpose of delivering up the Jews into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar was irreversible upon the supposition that the greatest part

of them would continue impenitent, which He likewise foresaw. (See verse 22 and chaps. 7 : 16, 27, 28 ; 13 : 14 ; 14 : 11, 12 ; 25 : 9-11.) Though elsewhere upon their repentance, to which God frequently exhorted them by His prophets (see chap. 25 : 4, 5), He promises the removal of His judgments. *W. Louth.*

30. "When this spoiling shall become a reality, what wilt thou do?" No matter how delicately clad or gayly ornamented thou mayest be, thy lovers, those heathen nations from whom thou hast sought their idol gods, or (according to the figure of the prophets) with whom thou hast played the harlot, will despise thee and will seek thy very life! How little will it avail thee then to have sought them as thy lovers when they shall have become thy murderers! So in every sinner's case there

will come an hour of doom in which his sins will become his tormentors, and Satan, to whom he has sold himself to do his bidding, will drop his mask and appear plainly the sinner's real and worst enemy!

31. These are the customary Hebrew figures to express extreme sorrow, affliction and agony. The whole people are thought of as a desolate female, the daughter of Zion, bewailing her sad lot, spreading forth her hands as if imploring help, and crying, "Woe is me now! my soul is wearied because of murderers!" Armed men are drinking the blood of all my sons and daughters! Thus closes this vivid portrayal of the desolations which were near to come on Judah and Jerusalem from the terrible Chaldean armies, unless the people should at once turn to God in penitence and find mercy. *H. C.*

JEREMIAH, CHAPTERS V., VI.

5 : 1 RUN ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that doeth justly, that seeketh truth; and I will pardon her. And though they say, As the LORD liveth, surely they swear falsely. O LORD, do not thine eyes look upon truth? thou hast stricken them, but they were not grieved, thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return. Then I said, Surely these are poor: they are foolish; for they know not the way of the LORD, nor the judgement of their God. I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they know the way of the LORD, and the judgement of their God. But these with one accord have broken the yoke, and burst the bands. Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities, every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased. How can I pardon thee? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they committed adultery, and assembled themselves in troops at the harlots' houses. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

6 Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her branches: for they are not the LORD'S. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD. They have denied the LORD, and said, It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine: and the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them. Wherefore thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them. Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest

16, 17 what they say. Their quiver is an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men. And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they

18 shall beat down thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustest, with the sword. But even in those
 19 days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you. And it shall come to pass, when
 ye shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD our God done all these things unto us? then shalt thou
 say unto them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye
 serve strangers in a land that is not yours.

20, 21 Declare ye this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying, Hear now this,
 O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have
 22 ears, and hear not: Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence,
 which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot
 pass it? and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though
 23 they roar, yet can they not pass over it. But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious
 24 heart; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the
 LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in its season; that reserveth
 25 unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest. Your iniquities have turned away these things,
 26 and your sins have withholden good from you. For among my people are found wicked
 27 men: they watch, as fowlers lie in wait; they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full
 of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.
 28 They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass in deeds of wickedness: they plead not
 the cause, the cause of the fatherless, that they should prosper; and the right of the needy
 29 do they not judge. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be
 avenged on such a nation as this?

30, 31 A wonderful and horrible thing is come to pass in the land; the prophets prophesy
 falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and
 what will ye do in the end thereof?

6:1 Flee for safety, ye children of Benjamin, out of the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the
 trumpet in Tekoa, and raise up a signal on Beth-hacherem: for evil looketh forth from the
 2 north, and a great destruction. The comely and delicate one, the daughter of Zion, will I
 3 cut off. Shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her; they shall pitch their tents against
 4 her round about; they shall feed every one in his place. Prepare ye war against her; arise,
 and let us go up at noon. Woe unto us! for the day declineth, for the shadows of the even-
 5 ing are stretched out. Arise, and let us go up by night, and let us destroy her palaces.
 6 For thus hath the LORD of hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and cast up a mount against Jerusa-
 7 lem: this is the city to be visited; she is wholly oppression in the midst of her. As a well
 casteth forth her waters, so she casteth forth her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in
 8 her; before me continually is sickness and wounds. Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest
 my soul be alienated from thee; lest I make thee a desolation, a land not inhabited.

9 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine:
 10 turn again thine hand as a grapegatherer into the baskets. To whom shall I speak and
 testify, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken:
 behold, the word of the LORD is become unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.
 11 Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD; I am weary with holding in: pour it out upon
 the children in the street, and upon the assembly of young men together: for even the hus-
 12 band with the wife shall be taken, the aged with him that is full of days. And their houses
 shall be turned unto others, their fields and their wives together: for I will stretch out my
 13 hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD. For from the least of them even
 unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even
 14 unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. They have healed also the hurt of my people
 15 lightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had
 committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: there-
 fore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast
 down, saith the LORD.

16 Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the
 good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls: but they said, We will not
 17 walk *therein*. And I set watchmen over you, *saying*, Harken to the sound of the trumpet;
 18 but they said, We will not hearken. Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation,
 19 what is among them. Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the
 fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words; and as for my law,

20 they have rejected it. To what purpose cometh there to me frankincense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices pleasing unto me. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will lay stumblingblocks before this people: and the fathers and the sons together shall stumble against them; the neighbour and his friend shall perish.

22 Thus saith the Lord, Behold, a people cometh from the north country; and a great nation shall be stirred up from the uttermost parts of the earth. They lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea, and they ride upon horses; every one set in array, as a man to the battle, against thee, O daughter of Zion. We have heard the fame thereof; our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, and pangs as of a woman in travail. Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for there is the sword of the enemy, and terror on every side. O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation; for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us. I have made thee a tower and a fortress among my people; that thou mayest know and try their way. They are all grievous revolvers, going about with slanders; they are brass and iron: they all of them deal corruptly. The bellows blow fiercely; the lead is consumed of the fire: in vain do they go on refining; for the wicked are not plucked away. Refuse silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them.

Chap. 5. This chapter sets forth yet further the grievous iniquity of the people, both in the line of corrupt morals and of idol worship, coupled with frequent intimations that such guilt must bring down upon them the retributions of Divine justice.

1. This proposition, "Go, explore the city of Jerusalem, and search diligently for one truth-loving man who executes justice; and if you can find one such, I will pardon the city," gives us a very strong view of the utter and universal degeneracy of the people. It reminds us of Abraham's plea for Sodom, and the Lord's pledge to spare it if he could find ten righteous men in it. H. C.

The Lord asks importunately that "*a man*" may be found, and then He defines and describes what He means by "*a man*," in the words, "one that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth." Such is His description of true manhood. So, then, the true man is he to whom truth—that which is right, that which is in accordance with the will of God—is the all-important thing. The habit of his mind, the purpose of his life, is to discover this truth—to know what is right. And when what professes to be truth comes before him, he weighs it in the balance of conscience, tests how it tallies with the mind and will of God; and according to its agreement thereto he approves or disapproves, he gives his judgment. And then, when his judgment is formed, his mind made up, as we say, he does not linger in the outer courts of mere approbation, but he presses on into the very sanctuary, the holy of holies, of corresponding action—he "*executeth judgment*."

Having sought, seen, approved the right, he does it; not once now and then, but habitually. Such is the *man* after God's own heart, such the Divine description of what manhood really is. P. C.

2. The men of Jerusalem swore by Jehovah, but this did not hold them to the truth. They swore falsely and perjured themselves. Scarce anything can be a surer test of the moral sentiments of a people than this. H. C.

3. The eyes, turned upon or toward an object, denote not only a diligent inspection and nice discernment of it, but also an earnest expectation or looking after it. The phrase may here be taken in both senses—that God both seeth and discerneth the truth, and also expects it from others, especially from those who call upon His name in attestation of it. *Blayney*.

What God requires of man. "O Lord, are not Thine eyes upon the truth?" This is better rendered, "O Lord, look not Thine eyes for fidelity?" *Faith* is the grand requirement. It is the condition of communion between man and God, and man and man. Scripture lays stress on this. Faith cannot be a mere logical abstraction or a condition beyond the reach of man. It must be practical—within the power of the will, and such as may be reasonably looked for in all. "Fidelity," the Old Testament equivalent for the New Testament "*faith*," has its expression in reality, honesty, thoroughness. These are the marks of the man God delights to honor, and they are the obligation of all (Mic. 6:8). P. C.

3-6. *Chastisement thwarted by universal stubbornness.* The chastisements are evidently in-

dictated as severe, and the reason of the severity is hinted in the preliminary question. God is looking for truth, looking for it in the midst of oaths broken and despised. He looks for faithfulness in all the ways in which it can be shown. There must be correspondence between promises and performances; there must be stability of character; the character must be such that men will be the same out of sight as in sight, working as ever in the Great Taskmaster's eye. Moreover, God cannot be put off by the most plausible appearance of fidelity; He knows always whether the heart is steadfast in its affection and zeal. And thus seeing all this insincerity among His people, this carelessness about truth, He chastises them to make them feel *their wrong*, attend to *His will*, and alter *their deceiving ways* so as to correspond with it. Y.

4, 5. There may be some hope, even for a wicked nation, while the fear of God remains in any considerable number of the wealthy and ruling part of it; but when once they come to be thoroughly corrupted, then everything is ripe for ruin. And therefore the prophet, after complaining very pathetically of the sinfulness and impiety of the bulk of his countrymen, still thought there was one resource left. But when he found that those of high condition were as bad or worse than the rest, he immediately gives up all, and pronounces their destruction. *Aph. Seeker.*

11. This verse gives a reason why they can no longer be accounted the Lord's people. They have been exceedingly treacherous toward God, breaking their covenant with Him in ways most insulting and abusive.

14. The meaning of this is that all the words of the Lord against them by the prophet should be fearfully fulfilled, to their sure destruction.

15-17. Here, again, we have the Chaldeans. They are surely coming to lay the land desolate. They are both powerful and ancient; in power, coming up at that time to be the conquerors of all Western Asia; in antiquity, running back to the earliest ages after the flood. Their language bore some affinity to the Hebrew, yet was so unlike that the Jews would not understand it. The comparison of their quiver to an open sepulchre is graphic, significant of death and destruction. It is remarkable that the prophet returns so often to this fearful prediction of invasion and ruin from the north, the Chaldean power. No doubt it was the merciful design of God to appeal to the fears of the people, and thus arouse them to serious consideration of their danger, and so of

their great sin. For the same reason the Bible, and especially the New Testament, reveals the fearful doom of the wicked in the world to come.

18. Again we have this merciful limitation, "I will not make a full end with you." Fearful as this destruction and captivity were to be, a remnant would survive, and Judah be again restored. So God is wont to blend mercies with His judgments all along through this world of probation. But no such limitation appears in the testimony given in the Scriptures as to the final destiny of the lost! Nowhere does the Lord say, Nevertheless, I will not make a full and final end of your hopes and happiness!

21. To have noble capacities for attaining all needful moral truths, and glorious opportunities for doing all duty, and yet to use neither, but deliberately to paralyze the one, and neglect or even spurn away the other—this is the great sin of all sins; this it is that dooms to hopeless sinning and woe. H. C.

No man ever yet offended his own conscience but first or last it was revenged upon him for it. So that it will concern a man to treat this great principle awfully and warily, by still observing what it commands, but especially what it forbids; and if he would have it always a faithful and sincere monitor to him, let him be sure never to turn a deaf ear to it; for not to hear it is the way to silence it. Let him strictly observe the first stirrings and intimations—the first hints and whispers of good and evil, that pass in his heart; and this will keep conscience so quick and vigilant, and ready to give a man true alarms upon the least approach of his spiritual enemy, that he shall be hardly capable of great surprise.

On the contrary, if a man accustoms himself to slight or pass over these first motions to good, or shrinkings of his conscience from evil, which originally are natural to the heart of man, conscience will by degrees grow dull and unconcerned; from carelessness it shall fall into a slumber, and from a slumber it shall settle into a deep and long sleep, till at last perhaps it sleeps itself into a lethargy that nothing but judgment shall be able to awaken it. *South.*

There is no greater mistake in the world than to suppose that we believe what we do not disbelieve. The common state with many of us is to do neither the one nor the other. Neither to think that Christ's word is true, nor yet that it is false; but to think nothing at all about it. But this is truly unbelief—truly,

and in the scriptural sense of unbelief ; because, although neither our tongue nor our understanding consciously says that Christ's word is false, yet our whole being says so daily ; it gives its witness against Christ's truth, silently indeed, but quite decisively. *T. Arnold.*

22. This representation of Jehovah as terrible in the greatness of His power is surpassingly grand. When the waters of the vast deep are driven fiercely by the tempest, they toss wildly about the largest ships ever built by man, and even lift and bear away rocks vast and ponderous ; yet, when they reach that low line of sand-beach where God has set their limit, they seem marvellously shorn of their power. The tiny sands build up the mighty breakwater, because God sets them there to mark the bounds beyond which the furious waves may not pass. And shall not that God be feared who is so great, and who is clothed with power so transcendently sublime ? *Shall not mortal man tremble before Him ?* H. C.

Just so completely under God's control, at His bidding and for the accomplishment of His purposes, are all events set in motion in our world, all arrangements ordered, all tides of circumstance and influence. It is determined just how high they shall rise, just what provinces they shall cover, just what lines they shall reach, beyond what measurement they shall not go, and within what limits they shall retire. Every movement among the nations, every revolution in the empires of the world, every change in the phases of human destiny, all plans and all accomplishments are exactly limited of God. All things are in His hands, and He securely keeps the soul of every creature that trusts in His mercy. Surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him. They may rise, and rage, and threaten to overflow his habitation and carry him away ; but in God he is safe ; nothing hurtful can reach him. *Cheever.*

31. Throughout this corrupt age of the nation, there were numerous false prophets, pretending to have messages from God, but of all living men most wicked and most palpably led by Satan. The priests themselves, horribly corrupt, made common cause with them, and availed themselves of their aid to augment their own influence. The people enjoyed their delusive promises of peace and prosperity. Hence, the Lord fitly asks, What will they all do *in the latter end*, the final issue of such a course of horrible wickedness ?

Chap. 6. The same general strain continues

through this chapter. Judging from its scope, we must assign it to the same date as the two next preceding. It paints the sins of the people ; rebukes their hypocrisy ; and repeats the fearful threatenings of the Chaldean invasion. H. C.

1. Jerusalem was in the lot of the tribe of Benjamin (Josh. 18 : 28), on which account the inhabitants are addressed by the name of "the children of Benjamin," and are directed to leave the city, which God was about to destroy, and to take refuge in the mountains. Tekoa, according to Jerome, was a little town about twelve miles from Jerusalem, and Beth-haccerem (probably so called from the vineyards round about it) another little town on the same side, but nearer Jerusalem ; and both of them in the mountainous parts of Judah, south of the capital.

4, 5. The alacrity and eagerness with which the Chaldeans undertake and execute the commission with which they were charged, is described in this and the following verse in a beautiful vein of poetry. Though it was late in the day before they received their orders, they are for beginning their march immediately ; and though it was night before they got to the place, they are unwilling to put off the assault till morning. *Blayney.*

6, 7. The ancient mode of besieging walled cities was by raising a high mount outside, around the city, as high or even higher than the city walls. In this work, as well as in their machinery, trees and timber would be used. This visitation of judgment on the city was due her for her oppression of her poor and of her servants. (See chap. 34 : 8-22.) Oppression had become her ruling passion. Her wickedness poured forth its developments and manifestations as a fountain does its waters. H. C.

8. *Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem.* Take warning by the many threatenings and judgments I have denounced against thee ; amend thy ways and doings, lest if thou persist in thy wickedness my mind and affection be utterly alienated from thee (see Ezek. 23 : 17, 18 ; Hos. 9 : 12), and I give thee up to ruin and desolation. This threatening God fulfilled afterward when He suffered the city and nation to be utterly ruined and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar ; but it still received a further completion in that final desolation brought upon them by the Romans, under Titus and Vespasian. *W. Lowth.*

10, 11. The prophet sees and feels the solemn urgency of the case, and therefore person-

ally longs to have his messages reach the hearts of the people and bring them to repentance. But he meets only resistance, hard hearts scorning his words and hating his Divine Master. Where can he find a man to hear? "To whom shall I speak and bear this testimony? Who will hear it?" An "uncircumcised ear" opens not itself to God and has never been consecrated to Him—circumcision being the ancient rite of consecration. They *cannot* hear, because they do not love and choose to hear. They intensely hate and loathe the word of God.

13. Covetousness (the passion for unrighteous gain is the sense of the original) was one of the crying and damning sins of the people. Prophet and priest alike were false, pretending to speak for God, but really speaking only for the "father of lies." That the fearful degeneracy of the people was largely due to the influence of false prophets and corrupt priests is repeatedly intimated in the records of those times. But for their influence, the true prophets would very probably have been heard to purpose, and the people have been saved. H. C.

Of covetousness, cunning is the chosen counsellor and guide. It finds its way, as by instinct, through all the intricacies of the great labyrinth of fraud. It parts with no company and refuses no aid through fear of contamination. Blood is not too sacred for it to buy, nor religion too Divine for it to sell. From the first step in fraud to the dreadful consummation of apostasy or murder, covetousness is familiar with every step of the long, laborious and fearful path. Could we only see it embodied, what a monster should we behold! Its eyes have no tears. With more than the fifty hands of the fabled giant, it grasps at everything around. In its march through the world it has been accompanied by artifice and fraud, rapine and injustice, cruelty and murder; while behind it have dragged heavily its swarm of victims—humanity bleeding, justice in chains, and religion expiring under its heavy burdens; orphans and slaves and oppressed hirelings, a wailing multitude, reaching to the skirts of the horizon; and thus dividing the earth between them (for how small the number of those who were not to be found either triumphing in its van or suffering in its train), it has, more than any other conqueror, realized the ambition of gaining the whole world, of establishing a universal empire. J. Harris.

An absorbing master passion, like covetousness or ambition, when it has grown so great as to domineer over the enslaved soul, *although it may exclude some other inconsistent passion,*

does not reign alone, but has around and behind it a gloomy train of satellites, which are little tyrants in turn. Covetousness—let it sway the soul, and suspicion, fraud, falsehood, discontent, envy, malice, will get as firm a foothold as the master demon himself, and no power of his can afterward drive them from his company. The miser cannot be also a prodigal, but he must have spirits of hate and death in his soul. So ambition may exclude covetousness from the throne, but it has another train of its own familiars, as greedy, if not as base as those of covetousness. T. D. W.

It never strikes men of this sort that there is a more excellent way to satisfy and exhilarate the heart. *God's eye is upon this universal desire for large possessions*, and He can make a Divine and truly wise use of the desire. He turns our thoughts to the heavenly, the unseen, the eternal. Man does well in having the largest views as to possessions; he does well in looking to an immense increase of goods. It is a grand thing when he can pull down his barns and build greater, if it is only spiritual wealth that he is heaping up. In this gathering of goods there is no spoiling of the brethren, leaving them hungry, naked and unsheltered. The spiritual wealth of the godly man makes poverty to none. Nay, rather—beautiful contrast!—the richer he becomes, the richer he makes all with whom he comes in *living* contact. Y.

14. This case should be an admonition against this form of sin in all ages and under all circumstances. When God is using His agencies of discipline and affliction for good moral ends, let us take care lest we counteract His efforts! It is fearful at such a time to whisper comfort to smitten hearts by saying, "For no sin of yours;" "No hand of God in this;" "Bear up under your inevitable fate, and make as little of it as possible." It were infinitely better to say nothing than to speak at random, or to speak without noticing or understanding what God aims to accomplish. H. C.

15. He who, after the commission of great sins, can look God, his conscience and the world in the face without blushing, gives a sad demonstration that he is too far gone in the ways of sin and death to be reclaimed to God or recovered to himself without a miracle. For having lost not only the substance of virtue, but the very color of it too (as the philosopher called blushing), and the principles of morality having, upon the same account, lost all hold of him, he now seems to claim a place in the highest rank of sinners; and from the condition

of the actually disobedient and (as yet) impenitent, to have passed into the unspeakably worse estate of the desperate and incurable. For though Almighty God is very free and forward in the addresses of His grace to the souls of men, yet still there must be something in them for grace to work upon—to wit, something of natural spiritual sense and tenderness; which, if once extinct and gone (as they may be, and God knows too often are), the Spirit of God will find nothing in such a soul to receive His impressions. *South.*

The sin against the Holy Ghost is set forth here. For the sin is no one definite act, but a condition of mind which renders repentance hopeless and persistence in sin certain (cf. Revised Version, Mark 3: 29, where the true reading is as there given, “is guilty of an eternal sin”). But is not this the condition described in the text, described vividly, accurately? They had hardened themselves till repentance, yea, even shame, on account of “abomination” was utterly absent from them. “‘They were not at all ashamed,’ no tinge of it, not the least ‘blush’ was visible. Was it not certain that such people who would go on, as they did, in sin, were in danger of eternal sin?” Hence they had never forgiveness, and the prophet was forbidden (see chap. 7: 16) even to pray for them. *P. C.*

Custom in sinning never fails in the issue to take away the sense and shame of sin. And the shameless person cannot but add iniquity to iniquity, until his recovery becomes utterly impossible. For where there is no place for shame, there can be none for repentance. Shamelessness naturally and necessarily seals a man up under impenitence, and impenitence seals him up to destruction. *South.*

16, 17. The “old paths” were the ways of their early fathers, who walked humbly with God, and adhered zealously to His worship as opposed to the worship of idols. So walking, they would find rest and peace. This pending invasion need not alarm them. They would also have peace of soul, a consciousness of right-doing, and a sense of God’s favor. But they said, “No, we will not walk in those ways.” The “watchmen,” set of God over the people, were the true prophets, their spiritual shepherds. The same figure is drawn out more fully, Ezek. 3: 17 and 33: 7. *H. C.*

16. The old path which men with the word of God in their hands and His grace in their hearts took to serve Him in this world, and to dwell with Him in heaven in the next, is the right one. By abiding in their old path, we

are most likely to abide in the true faith. Such is the very counsel which God expresses by the prophet in a figure drawn from pastoral life, and intelligible to all who are in any measure familiar with the scenery of our glens and the habits of the sheep. Wherever they have to skirt a precipice, or wind through the black morass, they march in single file, and stick to the old, beaten path, trodden down and marked even on scattered stones and outlying rock by the feet of generations that have gone before; and referring to this, God addresses His people thus—“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” And so shall we, in the old faith of “Jesus Christ and Him crucified,” safely and sweetly sheltered from every storm in the clefts of that Rock of Ages. *Guthrie.*

The case assumed is that of a traveller, who, on his journey, finds himself at the opening of many ways, and knows not with any assurance which of them leads to his resting-place, or which of them will bring him thither by the most direct and the safest road. The place which he seeks is a most ancient city, the way to which men have traversed in all ages. That fresh foot-path through the flowery meadows, that bridle-path round by the marshes, this fresh cutting through the hills—these will not do for him; he must ask for the *old* path. But there may be more old paths than one. The broad and pleasant way that leadeth to destruction is as old as and far better frequented than the straight road that leadeth unto life. It is, therefore, necessary to seek not only “the old path,” but “the good way.” Although every old way may not be good, the good way is certainly old; if, therefore, the traveller finds and follows the way that is both old and good, he is safe—he shall without fail reach his home at last, and “find rest to his soul.” As this last expression occurs only in one other place, the mind is carried forward to our Saviour’s invitation: “Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, . . . and ye shall find *rest to your souls.*” And to come is not to come to Him, but *by* Him; for again He says, “I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.”

There was never yet found, and never will be found, any way of rest or safety for the soul, but by Him. And this is the old way. The apostle, indeed, calls it “a new and living way” (Heb. 10: 20), as having then received new and fuller illustration; yet it is a way as old as the fall, as old as the creation; and in-

deed, in the purpose and foreknowledge of God, older than the creation. It was not then, when the apostle wrote, a way newly opened, for it existed before all time; nor was it then newly revealed, for it had been made known to man so soon as he had fallen; nor was it then newly made use of, for all the Old Testament saints were saved by the same grace of Christ, and justified by His righteousness, and their sins pardoned through His blood, and expiated by His sacrifice, the same as those who have lived under the New Testament. In those latter days this ancient path had been more clearly shown and more fully opened up—just as now many an old road is opened up to the sun and air by the removal of the dense foliage that grew on either side and met overhead, admitting only here and there some stray beams of the sun, and allowing only a few glimpses of the clear blue sky. In all time there is but one way of salvation; there never was any other, and never will be. It is therefore our course, as it was formerly, still to inquire for the old path, the good old way, the pleasant way of Christ. *Kitto.*

The course of life should be determined after *thoughtful deliberation*. Jeremiah is to “stand in the ways and see.” It is foolish to go with the multitude without individual convictions of what is right, or to follow our own private impulses blindly and aimlessly. The choice should fall on a *good way*. Other ways may be smooth, pleasant, flowery at the starting, only to lose themselves in the pathless wilderness, while this may look more rugged and steep at first; but it should not be the present attractiveness, but the direction, the whole course and the end of a way, which should determine our choice of it. There are *old paths* of right. Religion has not to be made anew. It is not left for the latest saint to discover the way of holiness. Having found the right way, we should forthwith “*walk therein*.” Knowledge is useless without practice; nay, guilt is aggravated if, knowing the right, we follow the wrong. In the right way is *rest* for the soul. Even while on the earthly pilgrimage many quiet resting-places may be found (Ps. 23:2), through all the course an inward peace may be enjoyed (Prov. 3:17), and at the end will be found the perfect rest of the home of God (Heb. 4:9). *Adeney.*

“Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein.” Asking and acting, inquiry after the right way, and a resolute determination to follow it—when these conditions are supplied there can be little doubt as to the

issue. A life of practical godliness, based on faith in revealed truth, springing from the inspiration of the spirit of truth and purity in the secret soul—this is the way. It is the “old way.” New as regards the light Christianity has shed upon it, new as regards the revelation of Him in whose redeeming work its deep foundations have been laid, it is “old” as regards its essential principles of faith and righteousness. The martyrs, prophets and holy men of every age have left their glowing footprints upon it. Elijah ascended from it in his chariot of fire. David made the statutes of the Lord his delight as he pursued his pilgrimage along it. Abraham trod the same path, led on by the star of promise. Upon it Enoch walked in lowly fellowship with God. P. C.

The law of the Christian life is continuous increase in the knowledge of the depths that lie in the old truths, and of their far-reaching applications. We are to grow in knowledge of the Christ by coming ever nearer to Him, and learning more of the infinite meaning of our earliest lesson that He is the Son of God who has died for us. The constellations that burn in our nightly sky looked down on Chaldean astronomers; but though these are the same, how much more is known about them at Greenwich than was dreamed at Babylon! A. M.

Love, joy, humility, heavenly-mindedness, godly sorrow for sin and holy resolutions against it, are not promoted so much by novel speculations, as by placing in a just and affecting light the acknowledged truths of the Gospel, and thereby stirring up the mind by way of remembrance. “While I am in this tabernacle,” said Peter, “I will not be negligent to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the present truth.” We appeal to the experience of every real Christian, whether the sweetest and most profitable seasons he has enjoyed have not been those in which he is conscious of having learned no new truth, strictly speaking, but was indulged with spiritual and transforming views of the plain, unquestionable discoveries of the Gospel. As the word of God is the food of souls, so it corresponds to that character in this respect among others—that the strength and refreshment it imparts depend not upon its novelty, but upon the nutritious properties it possesses. It is a sickly appetite only which craves incessant variety. R. Hall.

Christianity is not a religion of sentiment, or

philosophy, or speculation, or vague, glittering generalities, or merely negative teachings, but of definite, positive, fundamental, sharply defined principles of faith and living, which cannot be ignored, or questioned, or trifled with, and not jeopardize all that is vital to man's highest interest, in this world and the next. Doctrine is the rock on which the Church is built. Doctrine is the main weapon of her defence and aggressive power. Doctrine is the vital life of every believer. The Church is weak to-day, and sickly, and has not power to prevail with God or man, because not "rooted and grounded" in the knowledge and spirit of the distinctive, fundamental teachings of God's revealed Word. "The good old way" of apostolic faith, the old way of martyrs and reformers, and of a "great cloud of witnesses," who have testified for God, is widely departed from at many points. *Sherwood.*

The theology which is pre-eminently needed *in our times* is that whose substance and manner have met the needs of *men in all times*. This, in its essential principles, is the old, time-honored theology of the Christian Church, with its two foci of sin and redemption, all viewed as dependent on God. It is based upon the solid granite rock (the only true *petra*) and built up of living stones in massive proportions, rising ever upward until its aspiring lines fade away in the bosom of the infinite, whither it leads us that there we may rest. That old theology—older than our schools, older than the earth and the stars—coeval with the Godhead; always yet never old, never yet ever new; it is dateless and deathless as the Divine decree, yet fresh as the dawning light of a new day in every new-born soul; it has been known from the beginning to all penitent and believing souls; it is uttered in every humble prayer; it has been sung in such melodious and rapturous strains as have nowhere else found voice. Some one has said that it is a theology which can never be sung; but it is the only theology which has called forth the tenderest and loftiest tones of human feeling; which finds its full expression equally in that saddest of human music, the woful *miserere* which recalls the sacred, awful passion of our dying Lord, and the jubilant and triumphant anthem which celebrates His accomplished victory. That old theology, the living essence of our sacred Scriptures, abiding substance of our creed, the sense of our confessions, and the consensus of our schools, has been held and taught by the most piercing and soaring intellects of our Christian times—Athanasius and Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas,

Luther, Melancthon and Calvin, Turretine and Edwards; and through them it has taught and fashioned the most vigorous and advancing churches and nations of modern times. *H. B. Smith.*

20. The people still kept up the routine of the temple-worship. In this they made use of incense obtained from Sheba, a province of Arabia Felix, celebrated for its rich spices. But of what use were those costly spices of which God speaks? The people had no heart in their worship of God, and hence He could have no pleasure in their sacrifices. This last statement should be taken in its strongest sense. So far from merely taking no pleasure, He loathed and abhorred them. So it must be evermore when worship is offered to God in which the offerer gives not his heart.

24, 25. The "fame" is the report, the tidings of the Chaldean approach. It unnerved the nation. They were utterly unable to cope with such a power. They knew that help from the God of their fathers could not be reasonably expected, because they had revolted from Him. Indeed, they had good cause to know that this invasion was the scourge of God on them for their sins. *H. C.*

27-30. *The prophet a spiritual assayer.* Of interest as a description of process of refining precious metals among ancient peoples. The grinding and washing of the ore to discover and separate the precious metals, the fusing of the silver with lead in order to its further purification, and the repetition of this under severer heat, are processes which are used to illustrate the influence of the words of revelation upon the human heart. *M.*

To try the ways of the nation and its leaders by their conformity to the injunctions of the Divine covenant; to insist with inexorable severity upon the dignity and sole sovereignty of Jehovah; to testify unreservedly before high and low, and especially before the theocratic office-bearers, against every declension from Him and from His law; to proclaim the Divine judgments against the obdurately disobedient, and to be in some circumstances themselves the executioners thereof, and, on the other hand, to promise, when needful, deliverance and blessing—such were the duties which constituted the political agency of the prophets. *Oehler.*

28. "Grievous revolvers" is, in the original, intensely strong—the superlative degree of revolt, corruption and wickedness. They are only brass and copper, when they should be gold and silver. They make others corrupt, marring all they touch. *H. C.*

29, 30. The words refer to the *office of an assayer of silver and gold*; and the *manner of assaying* here intended is by the *cupel*. To separate the alloy from the silver, they add a portion of *lead*; and when all is fused together, and brought into a state of ebullition, the cupel absorbs the lead, and with it the dross or alloy; and the silver is left pure and motionless on the top of the cupel. The people are here represented under the notion of *alloyed silver*. They are full of *impurities*; and they are put in the hands of the prophet, the *assayer*, to be purified. The *bellows* are placed, the *fire* is lighted up, but all to no purpose; so intensely commixed is the alloy with the silver, that it cannot be separated. The nozzle of the *bellows* is even *melted* with the intensity of the fire used to effect the refinement; and the *lead is carried off* by the action of the heat; and the *assayer melteth in vain*, for the alloy still continues in union with the metal. The assayer gives up the process, will not institute one more expensive or tedious, pronounces the mass unfit to be coined, and denominates it *reprobate silver* (verse 30). Thus, the evil habits and dispositions of the Israelites were so ingrained that they would not yield to either the *ordinary or extraordinary* means of salvation. God pronounces them *reprobate silver*, not sterling, full of alloy, having neither the image nor the superscription of the Great King either on their hearts or on their conduct. Thus He gave them up as incorrigible, and their adversaries prevailed against them. This should be a warning to other nations, and indeed to the Christian Church; for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare these. A. C.

29. The idea of the verse is, that the people, being assayed as ores from the mine, cannot be purified; they afford no precious metal. Everything passes off in dross, and the process proves the utter worthlessness of the material subjected to this trial. The people are all and

only dross. H. C.—*The wicked are not plucked away.* Or, “the bad are not separated.” By “the bad” are meant, according to the metaphor, “the base ingredients;” that is, the bad principles and habits, which prevail so much and adhere so closely, that all the endeavors and pains used by the refiner to purge them away and get clear of them are frustrated, and prove ineffectual; so that, as it follows in the next verse, nothing remains but to throw them aside, as a metal disallowed and cried down by authority, counterfeiting silver, but not capable of being brought to the sterling standard. *Blayney.*

The dross of society, permitted thus to remain and flourish, spoils the social progress, even under the best instrumentalities, because they are not separated, the vile from the good. But this is a part of God’s administration under the atonement, in order that character should be thoroughly tried and developed, with its tendency and power; that of the evil, to do evil, and prevent good; that of the good, to do good, and be purified and perfected. *Cheever.*

30. *Refuse silver shall men call them.* As base money is refused by every one because it cannot bear the touchstone, so shall these hypocrites and evildoers be rejected both by God and by man; for none of their actions will bear the test of God’s laws, or abide His severe trial. The Greek word which is rendered “reprobate” in the New Testament has an allusion to this place; and, in pursuance of the same metaphor, the laws and judgments of God are often compared to a refiner’s fire. (See Prov. 17:3; Isa. 1:25; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:2, 3; 1 Pet. 1:7.) *W. Louth.*

This is the conclusion of the whole matter. The world will be compelled to call this people of Judah and Jerusalem “rejected silver;” refuse matter; proved to be good for nothing. The Lord hath assayed them, hath found them worthless, and hath rejected them. H. C.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTERS VII., VIII., IX.

- 7:1, 2 THE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of
 3 Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.
 4 Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the
 5 temple of the LORD, are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if
 6 ye thoroughly execute judgement between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither
 7 walk after other gods to your own hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the
 8 land that I gave to your fathers, from of old even for evermore. Behold, ye trust in lying
 9 words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely,
 10 and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye have not known, and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered;
 11 that ye may do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become
 12 a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it, saith the LORD. But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I caused my name to dwell at the first, and
 13 see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye
 14 heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not: therefore will I do unto the house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your
 15 fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.
 16 Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither
 17 make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee. Seest thou not what they do in the cities
 18 of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour
 19 out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. Do they provoke me to anger? saith the LORD; do they not *provoke* themselves, to the confusion of their own
 20 faces? Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched.
 21 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Add your burnt offerings unto your sac-
 22 rifices, and eat ye flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day
 23 that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: but this thing I commanded them, saying, Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the way that I command you, that it may be well
 24 with you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in *their own* counsels
 25 and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have sent unto
 26 you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff: they did worse than their fathers.
 27 And thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou
 28 shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee. And thou shalt say unto them, This is the nation that hath not hearkened to the voice of the LORD their God, nor received instruction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.
 29 Cut off thine hair, *O Jerusalem*, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on the bare
 30 heights; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath. For the children of Judah have done that which is evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their
 31 abominations in the house which is called by my name, to defile it. And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and

32 their daughters in the fire ; which I commanded not, neither came it into my mind. There fore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be called Topheth, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of Slaughter : for they shall bury in Topheth, till 33 there be no place *to bury*. And the carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the 34 heaven, and for the beasts of the earth ; and none shall fray them away. Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride : for the land shall become a waste.

8 : 1 At that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and 2 the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves : and they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped : they shall not be gathered, nor be buried ; they shall be for 3 dung upon the face of the earth. And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the LORD of hosts.

4 Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD : Shall men fall, and not rise up 5 again ? shall one turn away, and not return ? Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden 6 back by a perpetual backsliding ? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright : no man repenteth him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done ? every one turneth to his course, as a horse that rusheth headlong in the 7 battle. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times ; and the turtle and the swallow and the crane observe the time of their coming ; but my people know not the ordi- 8 nance of the LORD. How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us ? But, 9 behold, the false pen of the scribes hath wrought falsely. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken : lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD ; and what manner of 10 wisdom is in them ? Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall possess them : for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covet- 11 ousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. And they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people lightly, saying, Peace, peace ; when there is no 12 peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination ? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush : therefore shall they fall among them that fall : in 13 the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD. I will utterly consume them, saith the LORD : there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the 14 leaf shall fade ; and *the things that* I have given them shall pass away from them. Why do we sit still ? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defenced cities, and let us be silent there : for the LORD our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, be- 15 cause we have sinned against the LORD. We looked for peace, but no good came ; and for a 16 time of healing, and behold dismay ! The snorting of his horses is heard from Dan : at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones the whole land trembleth ; for they are come, and 17 have devoured the land and all that is in it ; the city and those that dwell therein. For, be- hold, I will send serpents, basilisks, among you, which will not be charmed ; and they shall bite you, saith the LORD.

18, 19 Oh that I could comfort myself against sorrow ! my heart is faint within me. Behold, the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people from a land that is very far off : Is not the LORD in Zion ? is not her King in her ? Why have they provoked me to anger with their 20 graven images, and with strange vanities ? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and 21 we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt : I am black ; 22 astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead ? is there no physician there ? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered ?

9 : 1 Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep 2 day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people ! Oh that I had in the wilderness ■ lodging place of wayfaring men ; that I might leave my people, and go from them ! for they 3 be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongue *as it were* their bow for falsehood ; and they are grown strong in the land, but not for truth : for they 4 proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD. Take ye heed every one

- of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother : for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will go about with slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth : they have taught their tongue to speak lies ; they weary themselves to commit iniquity. Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit ; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD.
- Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them ; for how else should I do, because of the daughter of my people ? Their tongue is a deadly arrow ; it speaketh deceit : one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in his heart he layeth wait for him. Shall I not visit them for these things ? saith the LORD : shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ?
- For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the pastures of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none passeth through ; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle ; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled, they are gone. And I will make Jerusalem heaps, a dwelling place of jackals ; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant. Who is the wise man, that may understand this ? and *who is* he to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it ? wherefore is the land perished and burned up like a wilderness, so that none passeth through ?
- And the LORD saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein ; but have walked after the stubbornness of their own heart, and after the Baalim, which their fathers taught them : therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. I will scatter them also among the nations, whom neither they nor their fathers have known : and I will send the sword after them, till I have consumed them.
- Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come ; and send for the cunning women, that they may come : and let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters. For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion, How are we spoiled ! we are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because they have cast down our dwellings. Yet hear the word of the LORD, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation.
- For death is come up into our windows, it is entered into our palaces ; to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets. Speak, Thus saith the LORD, The carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvestman, and none shall gather them.
- Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches : but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth, and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgement, and righteousness, in the earth : for in these things I delight, saith the LORD. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all them which are circumcised in *their* uncircumcision ; Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that have the corners of *their hair* polled that dwell in the wilderness : for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.

Chaps. 7, 8, 9. These chapters manifestly constitute one message. Not only is there no evidence of closing one message and beginning another throughout this portion, but the same subject continues on through the entire passage. But it appears here without date. Yet a clew to its date is found in the evidence of identity as to circumstances and time between this message and that which commences in chap. 26. This evidence of identity as to cir-

cumstances and time lies in the following particulars : 1. In each message the prophet was directed to go and stand in the Temple and deliver it to the people who congregated—going out and coming in—there. (See 7 : 2 and 26 : 2.) 2. One of the salient points in each message, the one which manifestly attracted most attention, was God's threatening to make this Temple like Shiloh—*i.e.*, to destroy it utterly. (Cf. 7 : 14 with 26 : 6.) 3. The burden of the

exhortation and the only condition of sparing the Temple, city and people, is in each the same—"amend your ways and your doings." (See 7:3-7 with 26:13.) This mention (chap. 26) gives us the date—viz., "in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim." H. C.

Chap. 7. Besides the prophets, who were commissioned to announce the approaching calamities of Judah and Jerusalem, there were others who took on themselves to flatter the people with opposite predictions. They taught them to look upon such threats as groundless, since God, they said, would have too much regard for His own honor to suffer His Temple to be profaned, and the seat of His holiness given up into the hand of strangers. Jeremiah is commanded openly to reprove the falsehood of these assertions, and to show, by an example in point, that the sanctity of the place would afford no security for the guilty; but that God would assuredly do by His house at Jerusalem what He had done unto Shiloh, and cast the people of Judah out of His sight, as He had already cast off the people of Israel for their wickedness (verses 1-16). God justifies the severity of these proceedings by a representation of the people's impiety (verses 17-20). The prophet declares their sacrifices to be of no acceptance while they continue deaf to the calls of God's messengers (verses 21-28). He specifies the gross idolatries with which they were defiled, and pronounces a heavy sentence of Divine vengeance both on the dead and on the living (verses 29-34). *Blayney.*

4. They that slight the words of truth, which would profit them, take shelter in words of falsehood, which cannot profit them. Now these lying words were, "The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, are these. These buildings, the courts, the holy place, and the holy of holies, are the Temple of the Lord, built by His appointment, to His glory: here He resides, here He is worshipped, here we meet three times a year to pay our homage to Him as our King in His palace." This they thought was security enough to them to keep God and His favors from leaving them, God and His judgments from breaking in upon them. The prophet repeats it because they repeated it upon all occasions. It was the cant of the times, it was in their mouths upon all occasions. The privileges of a form of godliness are often the pride and confidence of those that are strangers and enemies to the power of it. It is common for those that are furthest from God to boast themselves most of their being near to the Church. H.

Under a vivid picture of a scene at the door of the old Temple, the prophet searches out a moral danger that is apt to accompany all public religious observances. Standing at the gate he sees a multitude of men crowding in to go through the forms of worship. He knows that they have just come from the selfish practice, in their markets, fields, streets and houses, of injustice, cruelty to the weak, overreaching "the stranger, the fatherless and the widow," of every kind of social, commercial, political and ecclesiastical falsehood, for he goes on to specify all these; and what is a great deal worse, that they are privately intending to go back to the same kinds of meanness and outrage after the prayers and sacrifices are over. He also sees that the moment their want of integrity is pointed out, they will, after the Pharisaic fashion, undertake to throw over it the screen of a religious profession. They will answer, at every rebuke of their immorality, "The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord," as if they would make up, by the threefold repetition and noise of their zeal, for their hollow-heartedness. And so, having it for his business as a prophet of God to denounce such corruption everywhere, without apology for his Divine commission, without arguing the matter, without any roundabout or imbecile phraseology, he goes to the point at once, and begins, "Trust ye not in lying words; amend your ways and your doings." The great instructive fact on which attention is to be fixed is this: that out of the multitude of persons who enter the sanctuary, many have only a formal, external and ostensible, not a substantial sympathy, or actual concern, with the holy Reality which is there embodied and presented. They throng the visible courts, without touching, in living faith, the sacred Presence, the life-giving hand of the Holy One who inhabits it. F. D. H.

5-7. This makes their moral duty toward their fellow-men exceedingly emphatic, and shows that one of the great, crying and fatal sins of the nation was its rotten social morals, the utterly corrupt moral life of the people. It was not their idolatry merely that ruined them. They had become horribly oppressive, cruelly unjust, fearfully false to all the duties of the second table of the law, as well as to those of the first. In all these things they must thoroughly amend their ways, else the Lord could not and would not let them remain in that land.

8-11. The idea of the false prophets which God here so strongly rebukes, was that they were saved from all danger of incurring His

displeasure and His judgments for their sins by their religious worship in this Temple. This worship (in their view) bought for them an absolute plenary indulgence for all the sin they might choose to commit. They were so *saved* by it that they could go on and perpetrate all these abominations named in verse 9—stealing, murder, adultery, false swearing and idolatry—and yet have nothing to fear! This would be, indeed, making the house upon which God's name had been called “a den of robbers,” where they might nestle securely, might house and shelter themselves against all danger from a just and holy God!

12. Shiloh, situated (Judges 21 : 19) “on the north side of Bethel, and on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem,” the location of the tabernacle from the days of Joshua (18 : 1) to the death of Eli (1 Sam. 4), lay within the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, and had been utterly desolated when that kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrian arms, B. C. 722—*i. e.*, one hundred and eleven years before Jehoiakim came to his throne. The Jews might look upon the doom of Shiloh, and see that God did not shield a wicked city from ruin because it had been the residence of His own visible glory among His people, and the one place of the required Temple worship. They might see that it was for the wickedness of His people Israel that God had laid that place desolate, and in this fact might read their own doom! H. C.—We cannot stand on Shiloh without an oppressive sense of its God-forsaken desolation. Scarcely a tree, not a dwelling is in sight; straggling valleys, too open to be termed glens, within an amphitheatre of dreary, round-topped hills, bare and rocky, without being picturesque, are the only characteristics of this featureless scene. *Tristram.*

13. They continued obstinate in their sin; that is proved by the testimony of God's messengers, by whom He spake unto them to return and repent, “rising up early and speaking,” as one in care, as one in earnest, as one who would lose no time in dealing with them; nay, who should take the fittest opportunity for speaking to them early in the morning, when, if ever, they were sober and had their thoughts free and clear; but it was all in vain; God spake, but they heard not, they heeded not, they never minded; He called them, but they answered not, they would not come at His call. What God has spoken to us greatly aggravates what we have done against Him. H.

God is ever speaking to His children. There is a Divine voice speaking, not to favored proph-

ets in rare moments of spiritual elevation, but to all men, that all who will may hear. This voice comes to us in many forms. The voice of *nature*—the proclamation of the power and wisdom of God in the awful, silent speech of the stars (Ps. 19 : 3), and the gentler language which tells of His tenderness and beneficence in the songs of spring and the glad shout of the harvest. The voice of *history*. God is in history, and speaks to us through the events of the past, warning by judgments (verse 12), inviting by acts of deliverance and gifts of mercy (Ps. 105). The voice of *providence* in daily life. Has not God been speaking to us through our own experience, using various prophetic agencies—the advent of a new joy, the cloud of a great sorrow, a visitation of the angel of death to the home? Has He not repeatedly roused, invited, pleaded and consoled us with voices from out eternity? The voice of *prophecy*. God had often so spoken to the Jews before the days of Jeremiah, and reference is plainly made to this fact in the text. That voice still lives, because truth is eternal. Thus God speaks to us through the inspired thoughts of the Bible. The voice of *Christ*. He is the “Word” of God made articulate in the dialect of men (John 1 : 1-14). He who sees Christ hears the voice of God. The voice of *conscience*. This is God speaking within the soul. Every time we feel compunction at doing wrong or an inward urging to do the right God is pleading in our heart by direct communion, spirit with spirit. P. C.

15. That which will exhaust the long-suffering of God is clearly shown us. It is not the fact of sin, great sin, repeated sin, but it is when, as in the case before us, *sin has been persisted in in spite of every kind and degree of plainest warning*. God had not merely let them know of the peril of their conduct, but His loving solicitude for them had shown itself in the most marked ways. God not only spoke to them, but like as “those who watch for the morning” rise up early, so God Himself awoke early—*i. e.*, He chose the most favorable hours, the most probable means for gaining attention to the truths which He, by His prophets, spoke to them. But it was all of no avail. “Ye heard not; . . . ye answered not.” Now, it is sin persisted in, in spite of all such Divine solicitude so repeatedly manifested, that God will not pardon. P. C.

16. This prohibition of prayer, this forbidding the prophet, and, by implication, all other good men to pray any longer for the reprieve and pardon of the Jewish nation, most terribly

sealed their doom ! In no other way could the Lord testify so absolutely to His purpose to destroy.

22, 23. There can be no doubt that this passage means, I never thought of requiring or of accepting bloody sacrifices *without obedience*. Comparing the one with the other, sacrifices are nothing—obedience is everything. Even when I brought your fathers out of Egypt and gave them My statutes by the hand of Moses, I was careful to promise My presence and favor only on condition of obedience, saying, “If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people” (Ex. 19 : 5). On the very point now before us, the relative value of sacrifice and obedience, the Lord said, by Hosea (6 : 6), “I desired mercy, and not sacrifice ; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings ;” in which passage the latter clause is the more precise statement. So Samuel said to Saul (1 Sam. 15 : 22), “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings as in obeying the voice of the Lord ? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” The strong form is put forcibly and admirably by King David in his most penitent hour : “For Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it ; Thou delightest not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit ; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (Ps. 51 : 17). Passages of like import may be seen (Ps. 50 : 8–15 and Isa. 1 : 11–17). Great moral lessons lie here : first of all, that the rituals of worship have not the least value before God unless the heart be in them and they really represent a loving and obedient spirit ; and next, that religious rites—the ceremonies and forms of worship—must never supersede and supplant essential morality in the sense of love supreme to God, and love impartial and equal toward all fellow-men—the latter evermore implying all the details of the second table of the law. So that when men think to make ritual services their price for an indulgence to sin with impunity, they need not expect, by such means, to bribe the Holy One ! Let them know that He abhors their sin, and will be likely, in some decisive way, to show it !

31, 32. This valley of the son of Hinnom lay on the south of Jerusalem. Tophet was a special locality in this valley. Here the Jews built chapels, fanes or small-sized temples for the worship of Moloch, in honor of whom they burned their own children in the fire. This murdering of children in idol worship was most revolting to Jehovah. And now, to make the

form of God's judgment on the nation a perpetual reminder of the sin which it punished, the Lord ordains that the place shall henceforth be one of general slaughter, so that it shall no longer be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but “the valley of slaughter,” and men shall bury in it till there be no more place to bury. Josiah had previously defiled the place to prevent its being used ever again for the murder of children in honor of Moloch. (See 2 K. 23 : 10.) Jewish writers testify that it was made the great receptacle for the filth of the city, and that a fire was kept continually burning there to consume this filth and the worms that forever fed upon it. Hence the place, with its ever-ascending columns of smoke, its stench, its loathsome associations of crime and of all abominations, became a vivid image of hell—the place of eternal abode and punishment for all the hopeless reprobates of the moral universe of God.

The earliest reference to Tophet in the Scriptures is by Isaiah (30 : 33). The other references are 2 K. 23 : 10, where Josiah defiled it ; and in Jeremiah, besides the present passage, are 19 : 6, 11–14. Without naming it, Jeremiah refers to it (31 : 40). The last verse of the Book of Isaiah, without naming the place either as Tophet or the valley of the son of Hinnom, yet manifestly alludes to it as a place not far from the holy city, to which, from time to time, the people would “go forth and there look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against God ; for their worm shall not die, nor shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.” Gehenna in the New Testament is a word transferred from the Greek language, in which it means “*the land of Hinnom*.” It is well known that our Lord used this term for the place of future punishment. Since some suggestive word must be used, none could be found more appropriate and significant. The history of Tophet and Gehenna ; the associations that clustered about it ; the cruel murder of infants there in honor of Moloch ; its doom to be a place of slaughter ; the dreadful carnage that came as a just retribution for its horrid infant murders ; the depth of its filth ; the loathsomeness of its stench ; its worms that never died ; its fires that were never quenched, and its smoke that never ceased to rise in the distant view from the holy city—all conspired to make this a fearfully truthful image of hell.

Chap. 8. The designation of date—“at that time”—and the general course of thought, combine to show that this chapter is closely con-

nected with chap. 7, a part of the same message. It pursues the same subject, the impending doom coming upon the nation through the agency of the Chaldeans ; its causes in the sins of the people ; the bitterness and the hopelessness of this doom.

6. The Lord still speaks. After each appeal made to the people by messages sent through His prophets, He listens to catch the words of the people ; but alas ! none speak well ; none of their words inspire hope of their repentance ; no man gives his mind to reflection, saying, What have I done ? Rather, after each momentary interruption, every man turns back to his course of sin, as the war-horse, roused by the trumpet-blast, rushes furiously to the battle.

7. These birds of passage understand when to turn their course and migrate from northern regions to southern, and again back to the northern. They mark the indications of the seasons and adjust their movements accordingly. But My people, saith the Lord, will not understand the laws of My moral kingdom ; they will not see that sin brings ruin, and that nothing but substantial turning back to God brings promise of mercy. H. C.

There is a spiritual instinct working in man with just as unerring certainty as that which guides the turtle, the crane and the swallow on their pathless way to climes and seasons at the distance of near half the globe ; but man disobeys it, and disregards the revelation which appeals to it, and which was given for its cultivation and its guidance. Of course, the longer it is neglected and disobeyed, the less perceptible and the weaker it becomes. Still it never goes out of existence ; there always remains the consciousness of immortality, the instinctive feeling of the necessity of preparing for the future world, and an instinctive warning and prediction of evil to come, if there be not this preparation. The direction in which this instinct impels the soul is always toward God, and to the exercise of prayer ; and men experience it and disobey it countless millions of times in their habitual existence, experience it and disobey it almost unconsciously. If they yielded to the instinctive warning impulse and obeyed it, under guidance of God's Word, it would become a power of discernment and of knowledge in reference to the spiritual world, infinitely more wonderful in precision and far-reaching insight, even prophetic insight, than the instinct of animals in regard to the sphere of their existence in this world. *Cheever.*

8. It should be read, "Lo, certainly the

lying pen of the scribes makes it" (the law of God) "into a lie." Of course these are false scribes, fellow-workers with the false prophets, who made it their business to pervert God's words and to misinterpret His law so that it could speak to them only falsehood and never truth. The whole verse expostulates with the people for their self-conceit and self-righteousness : How is it that ye boast of your wisdom and take to yourselves credit for having the law of God in your hands ? Alas ! that very law your false scribes and teachers pervert to a lie !

10-12. See the same sentiments, and nearly the same words, in chap. 6 : 12-15. The repetition of set phrases is one of the features of Jeremiah's style.

19. They profess to think it marvellous that God does not take care of His own city, Temple and people. To this assumed state of their mind the Lord Himself responds : If ye regard Me as your God and Saviour, why have ye provoked Me to anger with your graven images and with your foreign idols that are only a breath, mere emptiness and vanity ? How can you complain of Me for neglecting to save Jerusalem when she has done her utmost to repel Me away and provoke Me to exterminating vengeance upon her ?

20. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. These are proverbial expressions, and very plain in their significance. They speak of golden opportunities forever lost ; of salvation long within their easy grasp, yet utterly neglected ; till at length ruin comes and salvation is no longer possible. The harvest-time is past, and no supplies for winter can now be gathered. Opportunities for salvation come before remediless damnation. The summer and the harvest come before the inexorable rigor and the stern wants of a cold and barren winter. But as God lets the laws of nature take their course and bring winter on in its resistless march whether the sluggard gathers in harvest or gathers not, so in his moral kingdom time rolls us on toward eternity ; retribution stays not for the folly of the self-hardened sinner, but rather seems to hurry him on the more relentlessly to his appalling, inexorable doom ! Oh, will there not be bitter and unavailing regrets in that world of the lost ! Can there be one ingredient in their cup of woe more bitter than this, that their summer and their harvest came and went, and they were not saved ? The sweet tones of mercy's voice fell gently on their ear, but fell unheeded ! Love wept over

their folly ; fell at their feet imploring them to be wise—but love wept and implored only in vain ! And now they are not only doomed, but damned. H. C.

As a season of preparation for eternity, life may be regarded as sustaining the same relation which spring and summer do to the harvest. There is a time to plough and sow, and there is an appropriate time for the harvest, and if these are neglected, a gloomy winter sets in when there can be no sowing, and when it will be *too late* to secure a harvest. There are favorable seasons in life to secure salvation. They are, one after another, fast passing away. When gone they cannot be recalled ; and the favorable influence which might have been secured to bear on our future being is gone forever. We can no more recall it than the farmer can command the sun of springtime to rise again, or the showers and dews of summer to come down in the dreary winter. The opportunity of salvation will have passed away forever. A. Barnes.

We are *made* for the enjoyment of eternal blessedness ; it is our high calling and destination ; and not to pursue it with diligence is to be guilty of the blackest ingratitude to the author of our being, as well as the greatest cruelty to ourselves. To fail of such an object, to defeat the end of our existence, and in consequence of neglecting the great salvation, to sink at last under the frown of the Almighty, is a calamity which words were not invented to express nor finite minds formed to grasp. R. Hall.

How inexpressibly mournful is the lamentation, The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved ! How heart-breaking the wail, even of the weeping Saviour, over that beautiful and beloved city, once the Zion of the Holy One of Israel, and indulged with so many warnings, so many waitings, so much mercy, so much patience, so much long-suffering and forbearance, so many seasons of such gracious and gentle visitation, so many and such precious opportunities, precious and available, even to the last, and the last infinitely the most precious of them all ! “ Oh, that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace ! But now they are hid from thine eyes ! ” *Cheever*.

22. The people are morally diseased ; they have sinned against God and provoked Him to destroy them. They are warned by the prophet to repent and turn to God ; they refuse and sin on. Destruction is come upon them. Might they not have avoided it ? Yes. Was it the

fault of God ? No. Did He not send His prophets with the richest offers of mercy ? Did He not give them time, the best instructions, and the most effectual means of returning to Him ? Has not *mercy*, the heavenly *balm*, been ever at hand ? And has not God, the great *Physician*, been ever ready to apply it ? Yes. Why then are they not healed ? Because they would not apply to the Divine Physician, nor receive the only remedy by which they could be spiritually healed. They, then, that sin against the only remedy must perish, because they might have had it but would not. It is not because there is a deficiency of grace, nor of the means of grace, that men are not saved ; but because they either make no use or a bad use of them. Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, has tasted death for every man ; but few are saved because *they will not come unto Him that they may have life*. A. C.

This soul-destroying plague, must it run its course ? or is there any cure ? Is there no balm, no physician who can arrest its ravages and restore the spirit's health, before it die the second death ? Blessed be God, there is. The Gospel guides us to Gilead. It bids us go up and gather its balm ; it reminds us of its great Physician, and invites us to carry to Him our sin-sick souls, and prove His skill, and reveals Him to us by that ancient name of His, Jehovah-Rophi, the Lord the Healer. . . . The holy life and atoning death of Immanuel are the balm of salvation ; and it is by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, that the Divine Physician applies them to the soul. He takes the things of Christ and shows them to the soul. He is the Spirit of Life, and heals those who are dying of their hurt, nay, even those who are dead in trespasses and sins. God's truth in the hand of God's Spirit, the Gospel applied by the Holy Ghost, the Balm of Gilead administered by the great Physician ; this it is which brings health, peace, joy. *Hamilton*.

The “ balm ” is a beautiful symbol of Christ. The Mount Gilead, the tree, the pierced side, the stream thence issuing and its mighty healing power—these severally send our thoughts to Mount Calvary, the cross, the pierced side of the Saviour, the precious blood and the unquestionable spiritual healing might there is therein. And Scripture is ever speaking of sin as a disease ; of man as one whose health needs recovery. The analogies are obvious. And the “ physician,” who is He but that Divine Spirit whose office it is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto men ? He so shows

to us the meaning and intent of our Saviour's sacrificial death, that "by His stripes we are healed." Yes; while we all are the stricken with mortal disease, Christ is the balm that surely heals, and the blessed Spirit is He who reveals Christ to the soul. "For no man can say that Jesus is Lord"—that is, in all the full meaning of those words, and with sincere intent—"but by the Holy Ghost." P. C.

Sin *contains within itself* no radical cure, no real reformation. Man is not led by sin into holiness. The means of recovery lie outside of the region of sin, beyond the reach of experience—they lie in the free grace of God, which sin very often opposes and rejects, when it comes with its healing medicines and its assurances of deliverance. The most which prudence can do, acting in view of the experienced consequences of sin, is to plaster over the exterior, to avoid dangerous habits, to choose deep-seated sins in lieu of such as lie on the surface. Exchanging thus Pharisaical pride for vice, respectable sin for vulgar sin, sin that does not injure for sin that injures body and good name, it seems to the unthinking to have worked a marvellous cure. But there is no true reformation, no giving of a new form to the soul, in the case. The physician has changed the seat of the malady, he has not driven it out of the constitution. T. D. W.

Balm was offered, and the physician's skill to apply it, but they would not come to be healed. They preferred the pleasures of sin along with its risks and pains. That their state was bad they knew, but they believed it was not near so bad as the prophet made it out to be. Only physicians can tell how many cases of bodily disease might be cured if the sick were willing to go to the root of the matter, and mend their habits as to eating and drinking, working and playing. Ignorance, indifference, prejudice and unblushing lust of the flesh lie at the bottom of much bodily disease, explaining both how it originates and how it continues. And similar causes operate with regard to such ills as afflict the consciousness of the entire man. Sinners must have a will to go to Jesus if they expect healing and life, and then life more abundantly. Y.

Deep down in the nature of God, deep down in the nature of the world, the idea of healing lay. God needed to be a healer, as the world needed healing. Sin brought disease and disorder into the world; God brought healing and harmony. The Divine purpose in the creation of man was that he should become holy and blessed in the free service of God; and since

man has fallen into sin through the abuse of his freedom, God carries out His original purpose under the new conditions which sin has produced. He works the painful consequences of sin into the plans of love, and thus makes them salutary instead of destructive. Toil teaches obedience, pain produces humility and death directs aspiration to a higher than a worldly hope. And thus the darkest human experiences enter as elements into the great redemptive process, and through the very evils that his sin has brought upon him man is healed and educated for the destiny for which he was created.

God as the healer is revealed to us by Christ Jesus. He manifested the Father in the special form of the Healer. The miracles performed by Him consisted chiefly in healing. He went about all Galilee healing all manner of sickness and disease among the people. And the reason of this was that bodily diseases represented the more dreadful diseases of the soul which He came to remove. Every cure which He wrought represented the deliverance of the soul from some particular kind of moral evil. . . . In the two great facts, that God has given His own Son as the Healer of the world, and has provided the means of healing from the foundation of the world, we have a guarantee that He will heal our Marah of trouble or disease, whatever it may be, if we seek His help. The individuality of human beings makes ordinary medicine always more or less empirical and tentative. When every organism is a separate problem, and no two constitutions are absolutely alike, it follows that the treatment of disease must necessarily be very uncertain. But the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin; and His salvation is the only universal panacea suited to all, sufficient for all and available to all. *Macmillan.*

Chap. 9. The connection of thought continues through this chapter unbroken. Hence, we can have no doubt as to its date and occasion. It is part of the same message as the two preceding chapters.

1, 2. This beautiful and touching utterance of grief has been justly admired by all who know how to appreciate the sensibilities of a benevolent heart. To estimate its fitness and force, we need to consider carefully the circumstances that called it forth. Think what he has been saying, and also what he goes on to say. His prophetic eye sees his own beloved country laid desolate; a fierce and bloody foe comes in upon the land from the north; the neighing of his horses is heard from Dan; they

sweep over the land, leaving it a waste of ruin—as if troops of serpents and vipers were let loose upon them, whom no magic skill could charm. He hears the wail of Zion's sons and daughters coming up from their desolate wanderings in a strange land. They would fain ask, Why are we thus spoiled? Why does not Jehovah take care of His own city and Temple? The answer comes: Why have they provoked Me unto such judgments with their idols and their incorrigible wickedness? Alas! he hears them bewailing their wasted opportunities, and mourning that their day of hope and mercy is past forever! These are the things that oppress his heart so heavily. The fearful crisis is not yet past. These calamities have not already fallen (save only in part) upon the nation, but they are close at hand. H. C.

Such Christians as the "weeping prophet" represents are men and women of great spiritual power. The world does not like them, but cannot help respecting them. We love realities, after all. We feel the power of the man who knows the most of them, and feels them most profoundly. The man or woman who takes God's views of things, interprets human life as God interprets it, looks out on eternity as God reveals it, and whose visage bears the marks of inward struggle of soul with the facts of human destiny as God declares them, is a power with us all. If we come into deep waters, and the billows go over our heads, we look around gasping for the friendly word or look or hand of such to cheer us. The very men we have laughed at, or shrunk from, are those whose experience we want then. *Phelps.*

5. There is a reflex influence from every tone and gesture of insincerity, which strikes back and debilitates the moral energies. Utter what you do not believe, and you will have less and less capacity for believing anything. Pretend what you do not feel, and feeling will die out. The retribution is dreadful, and sure, and works by an inevitable law. Or if you stifle the religious life that really wakes and rises within you, denying it air and light, you forfeit no less the blessing of the candid and sincere. F. D. H.

6. It is through the intrinsic deceitfulness of their hearts, their love of it and passion for it, that they refuse to know Me. That they live, not knowing God, is by no means their misfortune or their fate; it is truly and simply their fault and their crime. They choose to have it so. They might know the Lord, but they will not. H. C.

7. Such being their character, the Lord must

deal with them in the way of judgment if He has any designs of mercy for them. He uses the furnace of affliction as the worker in metals uses the fire to purge away dross and all impurities from the ore. "How else should I do, because of the daughter of My people?" No other course is consistent with either God's righteousness or His grace, inasmuch as the people are as they are and act as they do. W. H. G.—He will make trial of lesser afflictions, before He brings upon them utter destruction, for He desires not the death of sinners. They shall not be rejected as reprobate silver till the Founder has melted in vain (chap. 6: 29, 30). He speaks as one consulting with Himself what to do with them that might be for the best, and as one that could not find in His heart to cast them off and give them up to ruin, till He had first tried all means likely to bring them to repentance. H.

8. Pretences of the truth are a disadvantage; for they argue a conviction of the truth, and yet a refusal of it. It is a kind of practical blasphemy to veil an impure life under a profession of faith; for we do, as it were, tack on and fasten the errors and excesses of our lives upon religion. There is less dishonor brought to God by open opposition than by profession used as a cover and excuse for profaneness. *Manton.*

The assigning of pretexts and motives for our conduct which do not exist is a very common fault of our sinful nature. It takes place often in regard to actions of trifling importance. Little acts of selfishness are whitened into something better; excuses are pleaded which are unreal; by a series of petty deceptions unpleasant impressions concerning ourselves are brushed away from the minds of others. And the little deceptions pave the way for great. They blind us to ourselves. The pretexts we use to impose on others we half put faith in, and thus we weave a web of falsehood in which we ourselves are entangled. T. D. W.

10-22. The terrible threatenings of love. There are few more awful passages of Scripture than this. The doom denounced on the guilty people is indeed dreadful. Nevertheless that doom had not yet descended. There was a merciful pause, during which space was given for repentance. Meanwhile, the prophet was bidden to utter these threatenings. P. C.

15, 16. (See 8: 14.) God will give them a thoroughly bitter portion, a lot intensely afflictive and loathsome. This is tersely indicated by the bitterest things known, upon which they were to be fed, and which they must

drink. Some of them were to be taken captives to a land before unknown; others must fall by the sword. Precisely these judgments had been threatened long before for these sins. (See Lev. 26: 33 and De. 28: 61.) Another prediction of this captivity, yet more full, may be seen (Jer. 25: 9-11). H. C.

17. The mourning women, cunning women. It was an ancient custom of the Hebrews, at funerals and on other like occasions, to make use of hired mourners, whose profession it was to exhibit in public all the signs and gestures of immoderate and frantic grief, and by their loud outcries and doleful songs to excite and stir up a real passion of sorrow in others. Women were chiefly employed in this office; and Jerome, in his comment upon this verse, says that the practice was continued in Judea down to his days. As it required a degree of skill to discharge this office, for that reason these "mourning women" are likewise called "cunning"—that is, *skilful* women. Frequent allusions to this custom are to be met with in Scripture. Nor was this practice peculiar to the Jews, as many instances of it occur in heathen writers. *Blayney*.—Every particular here alluded to is observed on funeral occasions at the present day. There are in every city and community women exceedingly cunning in this business. These are always sent for and kept in readiness. When a fresh company of sympathizers comes in, these women "make haste" to take up a wailing, that the newly come may the more easily unite their tears with the mourners. They know the domestic history of every person, and immediately strike up an impromptu lamentation, in which they introduce the names of their relatives who have recently died, touching some tender chord in every heart, and thus each one weeps for his *own* dead, and the *performance*, which would otherwise be difficult or impossible, comes easy and natural, and even this extemporaneous, artificial sorrow is thereby redeemed from half its hollow-heartedness and hypocrisy. *Thomson*.

23, 21. These impressive words—good for all time and for all people—must of course be considered here in their special reference to the fearful ruin then impending over the city and nation of the Jews. In view of such perils, in an exigency so fearful, let not the wise statesman glory in his wisdom, as if his skill could save the nation. Let not the mighty chieftain glory in his military science, nor in the prowess and valor of his warriors. Let not the rich man glory in his riches; for what can gold avail

toward the salvation of his country in this hour of her peril? but let him who would glory at all glory in this alone, that he understandeth and knoweth God, and of course that he adjusts himself to this knowledge of God as one who exercises loving-kindness indeed, but also judgment and righteousness in all the earth; for these qualities of his character are dear to God, and He will surely reign in harmony with them, and will give them absolute sway in His moral government over nations and over men. Hence, if they would penitently seek His favor, they might rely on His loving-kindness; otherwise they must expect naked judgment and righteousness, for the time had come to visit judgment on all the incorrigibly wicked. It was the ruin of the Jews of that age that they had reckoned without God. Their plans and hopes had left out the Almighty, and made no account of His great attributes of loving-kindness, justice and righteousness. They had trusted in their own wisdom, might and riches, and had made these their glory. H. C.

23. Strength, worldly wisdom or riches are totally inadequate to furnish any pledge of human happiness; and they provide not the least exemption from the evils to which we are exposed. They never, for a moment, can confer on us the approbation of our own minds; and unless man approve himself, he never can enjoy the suffrage of his fellow-creatures. Tranquillity of mind, especially in the prospect of futurity, can never be the portion of these endowments separately or combined; that peace of mind which passeth all understanding can never be the result of these qualities; on the contrary, they have a tendency to destroy it by engaging us in new schemes and enterprises, which continually occupy the mind. Nor did any man on his elevation to riches, or any distinction, ever arrive at such a condition as that he felt himself happy and able to look around him, and to reflect on the future or the past with composure and satisfaction. Nor is there protection in riches, strength and wisdom of a worldly kind, against the attacks of enemies, against the complaints of discontent, against the perturbations of ungovernable passions, against the canker of corrupt principles. *And they are of a very transient duration and possession.* Some of them are extinguished in a moment. The least derangement of the nervous system may throw into desolation the most magnificent fabric of the human frame. And with respect to riches, do they not make themselves wings, and leave their possessors behind? And it is likely that, if prudence were left to

determine, the probability of success would not be equal to the probability of failure. But even suppose they could be carried forward to the end of life, how short is that period when compared to that vast duration which awaits us beyond it! *R. Hall.*

You cannot truly live and merely possess. You are out of line and out of touch with God's great order if you keep yourself and its belongings to yourself. If you merely accumulate, if you merely grow big in fortune, knowledge, culture, deftness, or anything else you are a monstrosity, a deformity.

And so it is with knowledge. Suppose you heap up knowledge. You know all the languages, and all the philosophies, and all the sciences. What then? If that is all—if your knowledge and culture do not go out from you, are not worked at their highest power to form and stimulate society's thought, to lift its ignorance, to expose and fight its popular fallacies—you are nothing better than an unloaded lumber-wagon. Remember that intellectual power is not unselfishness. Remember that literary and artistic pursuits, while they may be beautiful ministers to humanity, may be only ministers to self. Remember that there may be an intellectual and æsthetic sensuality, no less than a physical and gross sensuality. You are debtors. The worse the world is, the more it needs the good man. The more ignorant it is, the louder is the demand on the Christian scholar. The place of the true man to-day is in the world, not above it. *Vincent.*

24. But let him that glorieth. To glory in a thing, is to depend on it as the means or cause of procuring happiness. But there can be no happiness but in being *experimentally acquainted* with that God who *exercises loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth.* A. C.—The true glory of the worst of men is that *he can be regenerated.* The glory of the best of men is that *he has been regenerated.* The great end to be aimed at is that every man should exult in his having been made a *partaker of the Divine nature.* Y.

To know God denotes not merely an acquaintance with His character, but a suitable state of mind toward Him; the terms *see* and *know* denote their appropriate affections; they indicate the state of the heart. To know God is to feel affected toward Him in a manner suited to His character, to be submissive to His government, willing to be dealt with by His administration, to be in subjection to His authority, to yield obedience to His will. It is, in fact, another expression for that religion

which unites the heart of the creature to the Creator. Now this, the prophet tells us, is a ground of boasting. The principles of true religion supply the deficiencies that belong to the former acquisitions, and what is denied to those is with the greatest propriety transferred to true religion. *R. Hall.*

The knowledge of God and personal fellowship with Him are immeasurably more worth our seeking and rejoicing in than all those endowments which to the carnal eye are so full of charm. There is a natural tendency in men to rejoice unduly in the good that they derive by birth, or education, or the favor of providence, forgetting that the *chief good* is something of a different kind, something that must come to them in a different way. Nothing that tends to enrich and adorn and gladden our life in this world is to be despised; but if we measure things by a true standard, and esteem them according to their real and relative value, we shall place everything else that men call good or great beneath that which connects us directly with God and heaven and immortality. This higher good is more truly our own than anything else ever can be. Unlike other forms of good, it is incapable of abuse. It enables us, as nothing else can, to appreciate all that is true and good in this world. And it gives us the power to confer the greatest benefits on our fellow-creatures. W.

Imitation of God will spring from the knowledge of Him. The more we know of Him the more we must love Him, and admiration will lead to resemblance in spirit and in life. "We love Him, because He first loved us." *Knowledge depends on and leads to obedience* (John 7:17). The knowledge of God sheds light upon the universe and life, and directs the soul and body into the channels of health, happiness and usefulness. *It is connected with and culminates in Divine fellowship.* In this way the character and presence of God are brought into closest contact with the spirit of man, his character is moulded into the image of the Divine original, and the joys of communion deepen and enlarge into the blessedness of heaven. "This is life eternal [even now], to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." M.

"This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent;" and it is life temporal also, for godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come. The revelation of God—the Gospel of Christ—is our hope for future good, as it is the ground

of the blessings from which we give public and united thanks. It is so, because it places us under the government of a just, omniscient, almighty and good Sovereign, to whom all our acts are known ; to whom all hearts are open, and all thoughts are naked, and from whose dominions and administration no one can escape. It sets before us the highest possible motives to a virtuous life in the allurements of everlasting glory and joy in paradise ; and it dissuades from vice by all that is dreadful in eternal pain ; and thus it addresses our hopes and fears with a force which has no parallel. It provides for sinners pardon at the cross ; and by a love passing knowledge subdues them to penitence. In the Redeemer's life we have a perfect example, in His precepts a guide for our conduct invariably safe, and so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. The Scriptures assure us that the

Gospel is the wisdom and power of God, the riches of His goodness, the brightness of His glory, the concentration of all possible power and motive, and that if it fail to save us, nothing can save us, and nothing remains for us but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. And while the Gospel is thus adapted to reform men beyond all other systems, it has also the aid of the Spirit of God superadded, a power beyond all argument, beyond all eloquence ; a power which renovates the heart so that old things pass away, and all things become new ; a power which in a short time effects the most happy changes in individuals, neighborhoods and communities ; a power, in view of whose operations it is predicted that the knowledge of the Lord shall abound, all men know Him, wars cease, and the earth be filled with His glory.
R. Tinker.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTER X.

- 10:1, 2** HEAR ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel : thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the nations, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven ;
3 for the nations are dismayed at them. For the customs of the peoples are vanity : for one
4 cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman with the axe. They
 deck it with silver and with gold ; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move
5 not. They are like a palm tree, of turned work, and speak not : they must needs be borne,
 because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them ; for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them
6 to do good. There is none like unto thee, O LORD ; thou art great, and thy name is great
7 in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of the nations ? for to thee doth it appertain :
 forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their royal estate, there is
8 none like unto thee. But they are together brutish and foolish : the instruction of idols. it
9 is but a stock. There is silver beaten into plates which is brought from Tarshish, and gold
 from Uphaz, the work of the artificer and of the hands of the goldsmith ; blue and purple
10 for their clothing ; they are all the work of cunning men. But the LORD is the true God ;
 he is the living God, and an everlasting king : at his wrath the earth trembleth, and the na-
 tions are not able to abide his indignation.
11 Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, these
 shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens.
12 He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and
13 by his understanding hath he stretched out the heavens : when he uttereth his voice, there
 is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of
 the earth ; he maketh lightnings for the rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treas-
14 ures. Every man is become brutish and is without knowledge ; every goldsmith is put to
 shame by his graven image : for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in
15 them. They are vanity, a work of delusion : in the time of their visitation they shall perish.
16 The portion of Jacob is not like these ; for he is the former of all things ; and Israel is the
 tribe of his inheritance : the LORD of hosts is his name.
17, 18 Gather up thy wares out of the land, O thou that abidest in the siege. For thus saith

the LORD, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this time, and will distress
 19 them, that they may feel *it*. Woe is me for my hurt ! my wound is grievous : but I said,
 20 Truly this is *my* grief, and I must bear it. My tent is spoiled, and all my cords are broken :
 my children are gone forth of me, and they are not : there is none to stretch forth my tent
 21 any more, and to set up my curtains. For the shepherds are become brutish, and have not
 inquired of the LORD : therefore they have not prospered, and all their flocks are scattered.
 22 The voice of a rumour, behold it cometh, and a great commotion out of the north country,
 23 to make the cities of Judah a desolation, a dwelling place of jackals. O LORD, I know that
 24 the way of man is not in himself : it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O LORD,
 25 correct me, but with judgment ; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing. Pour
 out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on
 thy name : for they have devoured Jacob, yea, they have devoured him and consumed him,
 and have laid waste his habitation.

Chap. 10. This chapter is manifestly not connected with the preceding, and appears to be distinct from the following one. The close connection indicated here between verse 2 and verses 3-16 favors the view that portents in the heavens are referred to here only because they are so fundamentally connected with the ancient systems of idolatry. In this view we need not suppose this passage to have been occasioned by the occurrence of any extraordinary portents at that time. It may or may not have been. There is ample reason for the allusion to portents, apart from the supposition of their recent occurrence. This message seems to have been sent in anticipation of the residence of the people among idolaters in their captivity. There they would come into the closest contact with the whole system. Hence the propriety of exposing it to their view as ineffably foolish, false, and baseless—as is done here. H. C.

2. The Chaldeans, among whom the Jews were destined to live in captivity, were particularly addicted to astrology, and attributed to the heavenly bodies a considerable influence over human affairs. This naturally tended to beget a religious dread and awe of those objects, from whence so much good or evil was supposed to be derived. *Blayney.*

3-5. There is no method so effective, none which the sacred writers so often adopt, to show the utter folly of faith in images and idols as to state with considerable detail *how they are made*, and hence show what they really are. (See this done by Isaiah, chaps. 40 : 19, 20 ; 41 : 6, 7 ; 44 : 9-20 ; also in Ps. 115 : 4-8.) Here they begin with cutting a tree out of the forest with the axe. All that it is now more or other than a tree the hands of the workman have made it. Then another set of workmen take it in hand ; they deck it with silver and with gold ; but this puts no attributes of the real God into it. They are obliged to fasten it with

nails and hammers, so that it cannot move ; else it could not even stand alone. Now they are “turned work” (Heb.), smooth and straight as the palm tree, but they speak not ; none of them ever yet opened his mouth to utter a word. They must needs be borne by other hands, for they cannot walk. Be not afraid of such senseless, motionless, powerless things ! They can do you no hurt, nor is it in them to do any good. Impotent alike to curse or to bless, it is simple folly to fear them, and, of course, unutterable folly to revere and worship them as God ! H. C.

Let living faith in the living God be lost, and at once resort will be had to symbols and substitutes for God, which, though in form they may be far different from the idols of the heathen, yet in substance and effect are the same. For we also may substitute reverence for those things which are associated with the worship of God for that worship in spirit and in truth which He alone cares for. Symbols, sacraments, creeds, churches, religious observances—any one of these may become an idol—that is, a substitute for God. They demand no strain and energy of our spiritual nature ; the senses or the intellect can grasp them ; and they make no such strenuous demand upon the surrender of the will, the yielding of the heart to God ; they will let us do as we like, if not entirely yet far more than true spiritual worship ever will. P. C.

9. The prophet returns to the method of refuting the whole system of idolatry by giving the history of the manufacture of their gods. From Tarshish (Tartessus in Spain) they brought silver beaten out into thin plates for overlaying their wooden gods. Gold, in like manner, came from Uphaz, another name for Ophir, which lay on the southern shore of Asia. H. C.

10. There is no characteristic of the biblical

revelation of God which is more striking than the emphatic representation of God as the *living* God. The intense personal and moral character which is ascribed to God raises the biblical conception of the Divine Being to a unique and commanding height. This peculiarity characterizes the very earliest forms of revelation in Genesis, and constitutes one of their claims to inspiration. This is the dominant idea of the Jewish religion throughout, differentiating it broadly from all systems of Pantheism and Emanationism. God is the active, energizing one who is in living contact with men, feels for them in trouble, sustains them in distress, is angry with them in sin, yet loves them through all. This idea receives its crowning glory in the teaching of Jesus concerning God's sympathy, interest and care for men. It is the key-note of those sacredest Scriptures, the Sermon on the Mount and the parable of the Prodigal Son. *G. B. Stevens.*

The Scripture everywhere, in the ancient and in the later Testaments, manifests to us God as a person. If there be any authority in this word, if its inspiration comes from the Holy Ghost, which pervades all Scripture, making it holy, vital and majestic in every part, then God is here declared to us a person; as strictly a person in His existence and life as either of us, having all the elements and powers of a perfect personality in His eternal intelligence and will and heart. Our own personal constitution reflects, and one may say demonstrates, that personality in God. Personality is the highest fact in the universe. *R. S. S.*

11. This verse is written in Chaldee, as if the prophet designed to put these words in the mouths of the Jews, wherewith they might make a public profession of their own faith in the true God, and be able to answer the heathens that would entice them to idolatry. *W. Lowth.*—Nothing could be more palpable than the fact that those gods that were themselves made by human hands cannot be the one great God that made the earth and the heavens. In the argument the underlying truth is that *creatorship is the only proof of divinity* that is everywhere ostensible and forevermore reliable. He, and only He, who made all things is God. When you have settled the question, Who is God? you have settled it that all false gods, mere pretenders, arrayed of course in opposition to the true God, must perish. The great force of this verse lies in its being entirely free from anything offensive, and in its assuming nothing but what is essentially self-evident, at least so palpable and clear that no

mind can rationally, soberly, call it in question.

12. In these varied forms the prophet affirms that the power and wisdom of Jehovah were the efficient cause in the creation of the universe, the earth and the heavenly bodies. In the middle clause, the Hebrew word rendered "world" usually means the inhabited world, the world considered as peopled. *H. C.*—It would seem that no one who believes in God as being the Author of both the astronomical heavens and the Bible can doubt that there is a subtle harmony between them in virtue of which they must, on the whole, be mutually helpful when normally used. We are in the habit of thinking that works of the same author will throw light on one another. Accordingly we believe that astronomy contains very great help, not only for people already religious in the way of illustrating, emphasizing and enlarging their faith, but also for those who are yet so unfortunate as to be unbelievers of the most radical type. *Burr.*

13. The thought throughout the passage is sublimely grand. Jehovah's hand is in all those wonderful changes which take place in the waters of our world, now gathered in the atmosphere above us as in a vast storehouse; then descending in rain to feed the springs and water the fields; then flowing away to fill the great lakes, gulfs, seas and oceans; then ascending in vapors to complete the circuit of incessant and forever beneficent change. *H. C.*

16. "The portion of Jacob" is the same as the God of Jacob; He who had taken upon Himself the guardianship and protection of that family. But He was distinguished from all the rest, who, as before observed, were falsehood and vanity all of them, having no other existence than as lifeless images, the work of deluded men; whereas He was the Creator of the universe, of all that exists; and, that there might be no room to mistake the Being intended, He is further characterized as He who made choice of Israel for the special object of His concern, had marked him out for His own possession, as with a measuring rod; and to whom the name of Jehovah belonged. *Blayney.*—It was the glory of Israel to be possessed, claimed and regarded by Jehovah as His own peculiar people. It would be everything toward the great object aimed at in these messages by Jeremiah if he could impress the people with these ideas, and thus show them the pre-eminent privileges and destinies open to the Hebrew race; the pre-eminent greatness and glory of the God they might have as their own portion,

and so, the infinite folly of going after idols.
H. C.

Lord of Hosts. The *significance of the doctrine of Jehovah Sabaoth* consists in the fact that it teaches us to recognize not only the supermundane power and glory of the living God, but also makes Him known to us as interposing, according to His free and sovereign will, in the affairs of the world, and therefore not bound to the elements or forces of nature which obey Him; but as having, on the contrary, not only these, but also the spiritual powers of the heavenly world at His disposal for the execution of His will on earth. Hence this name not only expresses the contrast between Himself and a deification of the heavenly bodies, but also the general contrast between Himself and those heathen deities which are absorbed in nature and the world. Thus the contemplation of the Lord of the heavenly hosts is expanded to that of the *Omnipotent Ruler of the Universe*. (So. Ps. 24:10; Isa. 6:3; 51:15; 54:5; Amos 9:5, etc.) The chief passage, however, in this respect is Jer. 10:16 in its connection with verses 1-10. O.

19. In this and the following verses the prophet seems, by anticipation, to suggest motives of patience and consolation to his country, in regard to the evils that were coming upon her. These he puts into her own mouth, and makes her observe that her affliction, though great, was such as by experience she had found to be tolerable; that she had less reason to complain of what she suffered, as it was no other than might have been expected from the misconduct of those who had the direction of her affairs; and that she was not without hope in the mercy of God, who, upon the humble supplication of His people, might be moved to mitigate their chastisement, and turn His hand against the heathen that oppressed them. *Blayney*.

21. The religious teachers of the people had become utterly brutish, in the same sense in which idolaters had been shown to be brutish (verses 8, 14). They had gone into idolatry, and led the people after them. On their souls must rest the fearful guilt of ruining the nation! H. C.

23-25. *Fruits of a chastened spirit.* From what foul soil do the fairest flowers spring! Beautiful as they are, they are rooted in that which is altogether unbeautiful. The sweet perfume of many woods, seeds, flowers will not be given forth until they are gashed with the axe, or bruised, or crushed, or otherwise seemingly maltreated. We could not have the

many-hued arch of the exquisitely tinted rainbow were it not for the drear, dark clouds and the descending rain. The most precious of the Psalms were wrung out of the heart of David when that heart was well-nigh borne down with grief. And here, in these verses, it is the chastened spirit of Judah, personified in the prophet who speaks, that utters itself in the lowly confession of the twenty-third verse, the holy submission of the prayer of the twenty-fourth verse and the settled hatred of them who hate God which burns in the twenty-fifth. Consider these fruits, and may God make them to abound in ourselves. P. C.

23. "O Lord, I know that man's way is not to himself," in the sense of being under his absolute control. Thy hand is everywhere and evermore supreme, shaping all destinies and even all the lesser subordinate acts and ways of mortals. This recognition of God's universal agency introduces a prayer that God would shape the issues of their destined captivity in His merciful providence. The people express their sense of conscious weakness, and cast themselves on the supreme agency and control of God. Probably this language is put into the mouth of the people by the prophet as adapted to meet their case, rather than as truly expressing their actual thought and prayer at this time. H. C.

When life—as far as individual responsibility is concerned—really begins, how wise he proves to be who looks for the pointing of God's finger, and feels that he must follow it! The man who insists that he can make his own way only finds it perish at last. Because no way can be considered just as a way; whether it is pleasant or painful, easy or difficult, is not the great matter, but whither it leads, what lies at the end of it. As it would be foolish for a man to take charge of a ship ignorant of his destination and how to reach it, so it is equally foolish for a man to suppose that any way will do so long as it is as comfortable and easy as he can make it. Man's right way must be according to God's clear will; and it is the way of trust in Jesus, who is the Son and Christ of God. Note, further, the strong expression of individual assurance here given. "I know," says Jeremiah. He knew it indeed from his own experience. The way in which he now was, of prophet and witness for Jehovah, was not of his choosing. He did not think himself fit for it. And yet so far was he from being right in his own impressions as a young man, that it appears God had chosen him for a special purpose or ever his existence had begun. It

is a great blessing to a man when, either from experience of his own wanderings or prudent observation of the wanderings of others, he can say in this matter, "I know." He spares himself much anxiety and shame who is humble enough to put himself under Divine guidance.

God must establish man when he is in the right way. "It is not in man that walketh to make sure of his steps." In other words, though he may have begun the journey rightly, that is no proof that he will go on without hindrance or disaster to the end. In days when long journeys would have to be undertaken on foot, this expression with regard to the walking man would be very significant. The perils of such a journey were well known—perils from robbers; perils of losing one's way in the dark, and sometimes probably in the daylight; perils through trusting to strangers, who may deceive or insufficiently inform him; perils through sickness far from home and friends. And so in the great spiritual way there is needed humility all through. The way is made up of little steps, and a false step may not be possible to retrieve. Divine knowledge and Divine intimations must stand in the place of our experience. Faith in God's wisdom, which cannot fail, and in God's word, which cannot lie, must be our resource in all perplexity. There are times when common sense and right feeling are enough to guide our conduct, yet even these are more the gift of God than may at first appear. We cannot, then, be too minutely observant as to our need of Divine light and truth and assurance. Thus, being found in the right way and enduring to the end, we shall be safe. Y.

By "the way of man" we mean surely more than that chain of occurrences which strikes the senses. There is an inner life, which, though unseen, is loftier, vaster and more eventful. The history of the man is the history of his immortal part. While men look on the panorama of sensible things—the poverty, the pleasures, the journeys, the expeditions, the wars, the disasters, the triumphs of our race—eyes are gazing upon us from the spiritual world, intent upon those great realities which escape us, in the pilgrimage of the spirit—the shade and texture of the reason; the dangers, and crosses, and wounds of the moral part; the new birth of the soul; the mysterious assaults of principalities and powers; the sublime conflict with evil; the armor, the triumph and the salvation. This is the way of man, and it is not in himself. J. W. A.

24-25. The prayer here is, first, that God

would deal gently, tenderly with the people, that their ruin might not be utter and perpetual; and, secondly, that, upon the heathen who had rendered Him no worship, He would send His judgments more heavily and fearfully, because they had consumed Jacob, and led the people of the Lord away into a long and grievous captivity. In due time the Lord answered this prayer by His judgments on Babylon. This passage is sometimes quoted as if it referred to family prayer. Such reference can only be in the way of accommodation. H. C.

24. "O Lord, correct me, but," etc. *This is a model prayer.* It confesses wrong. It owns the need of correction. The man is no longer right in his own eyes. He is seen, like the publican, "standing afar off." It desires to be put right. (Cf. Ps. 51.) As there, so here, there is the longing for renewal, the clean heart, the right spirit. It deprecates not the correction, but the wrath of God. The man has a clear view of that wrath—its crushing, destroying power. It is good to have this. Without it there is the danger of our looking lightly upon our sin. *It is a most instructive prayer.* It teaches us: That all the corrections we have received have been fatherly ones—"in judgment," not "in anger." For had they been in anger we had not been here at all. That we are alive and in God's presence proves that the love of God, and not His anger, is ours still. For His anger would have "brought us to nothing." That there are corrections in anger. There have been such. Where are Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon, Rome? God brought them "to nothing." And there will be for all who harden themselves against God. That, seeing all need correction and will therefore receive it, either "in judgment" or "in anger," our wisdom is to make this prayer our own. One or other of these corrections we must have. Which shall it be? This prayer was answered for Israel. They have *not* been brought to nothing, and they *were* corrected. P. C.

We cannot pray in faith that we may never be corrected while we are conscious to ourselves that we need it and deserve it, and know that as many as God loves He chastens. The great thing we should dread in affliction is the wrath of God. Say not, Lord, do not correct me; but, Lord, do not correct me in anger; for that will infuse wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery; that will bring us to nothing; we may bear the smart of His rod, but we cannot bear the weight of His wrath.

25. It is a prediction of God's judgments

upon all the impenitent enemies of His Church and kingdom. See how the heathen are described, on whom God's fury shall be poured out. They are strangers to God, and are content to be so. They know Him not, nor desire to know Him. They are families that live without prayer, that have nothing of religion among them; they call not on God's name. Those that restrain prayer prove that they know not God; for they that know Him will seek to Him and entreat His favor. They are persecutors of the people of God, and are resolved to be so. H.

Moral decay in the family is the invariable prelude to public corruption. It is a false dis-

tinction which we make between public integrity and private honor. The man whom you cannot admit into your family, whose morals are corrupt, cannot be a pure statesman. Whoever studies history will be profoundly convinced that a nation stands or falls with the sanctity of its domestic ties. Rome mixed with Greece and learned her morals. The Goth was at her gates; but she fell not until she was corrupted and tainted at the heart. The domestic corruption preceded the political. When there was no longer purity on her hearthstones nor integrity in her Senate, then and not till then her death-knell was rung. F. W. Robertson.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTERS XI, XII.

- 11:1, 2** THE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and
- 3 say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel: Cursed be the man that heareth
- 4 not the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your
- 5 God: that I may establish the oath which I sware unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as at this day. Then answered I, and said, Amen, O LORD.
- 6 And the LORD said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the
- 7 streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them. For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of
- 8 Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the stubbornness of their evil heart: therefore I brought upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did them not.
- 9 And the LORD said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among
- 10 the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they are gone after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their
- 11 fathers. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and they shall cry unto me, but I will not hearken unto them.
- 12 Then shall the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem go and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not save them at all in the time of their
- 13 trouble. For according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to the shameful thing, even
- 14 altars to burn incense unto Baal. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.
- 15 What hath my beloved to do in mine house, seeing she hath wrought lewdness *with* many,
- 16 and the holy flesh is passed from thee? when thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest. The LORD called thy name, A green olive tree, fair with goodly fruit: with the noise of a great
- 17 tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken. For the LORD of hosts, that planted thee, hath pronounced evil against thee, because of the evil of the house

of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have wrought for themselves in provoking me to anger by offering incense unto Baal.

18 And the LORD gave me knowledge of it, and I knew it : then thou shewedst me their
19 doings. But I was like a gentle lamb that is led to the slaughter ; and I knew not that they
had devised devices against me, *saying*, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and
let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.
20 But O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see
21 thy vengeance on them : for unto thee have I revealed my cause. Therefore thus saith the
LORD concerning the men of Anathoth, that seek thy life, saying, Thou shalt not prophesy
22 in the name of the LORD, that thou die not by our hand : therefore thus saith the LORD of
hosts, Behold, I will punish them : the young men shall die by the sword ; their sons and
23 their daughters shall die by famine ; and there shall be no remnant unto them : for I will
bring evil upon the men of Anathoth, even the year of their visitation.

12:1 Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee : yet would I reason the
cause with thee : wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper ? wherefore are all they at
2 ease that deal very treacherously ? Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root ;
they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit : thou art near in their mouth, and far from their
3 reins. But thou, O LORD, knowest me ; thou seest me, and triest mine heart toward thee :
pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter.
4 How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of the whole country wither ? for the wicked-
ness of them that dwell therein, the beasts are consumed, and the birds ; because they said,
5 He shall not see our latter end. If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied
thee, then how canst thou contend with horses ? and though in a land of peace thou art
6 secure, yet how wilt thou do in the pride of Jordan ? For even thy brethren, and the house
of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee ; even they have cried aloud
after thee : believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.

7 I have forsaken mine house, I have cast off mine heritage ; I have given the dearly be-
8 loved of my soul into the hand of her enemies. Mine heritage is become unto me as a lion
9 in the forest : she hath uttered her voice against me ; therefore I have hated her. Is mine
heritage unto me as a speckled bird of prey ? are the birds of prey against her round about ?
10 go ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, bring them to devour. Many shepherds have
destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleas-
11 ant portion a desolate wilderness. They have made it a desolation ; it mourneth unto me,
12 being desolate ; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart. Spoil-
ers are come upon all the bare heights in the wilderness : for the sword of the LORD devour-
13 eth from the one end of the land even to the other end of the land : no flesh hath peace. They
have sown wheat, and have reaped thorns ; they have put themselves to pain, and profit
nothing : and ye shall be ashamed of your fruits, because of the fierce anger of the LORD.
14 Thus saith the LORD against all mine evil neighbours, that touch the inheritance which I
have caused my people Israel to inherit : Behold, I will pluck them up from off their land,
15 and will pluck up the house of Judah from among them. And it shall come to pass, after
that I have plucked them up, I will return and have compassion on them ; and I will bring
16 them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land. And it shall come to
pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, As the LORD
liveth ; even as they taught my people to swear by Baal ; then shall they be built up in the
17 midst of my people. But if they will not hear, then will I pluck up that nation, plucking
up and destroying it, saith the LORD.

Chaps. 11, 12. These chapters are closely connected, the persecution of the prophet by his fellow-townsmen and relatives of Anathoth constituting a connecting bond. (Cf. 11:19-23 with 12:6.) The message of chap. 11 appears without any date ; but the points made in it, especially the conspiracy found in Judah and Jerusalem to apostatize from God, and the violent efforts

upon the prophet's life, show that it must have been later than Josiah's reign, and, in all probability, soon after Jehoiakim's accession to the throne. Persecution against the prophet became virulent during this king's reign. (See Vol. VII., Sections 44-47.) H. C.

3. Cursed be the man that obeyeth not. After the reading, the prophet ap-

pears to *sum up* the things contained in what was read to them ; as if he had said, " Ye hear what the Lord saith unto you : remember, the sum of it is this—the man is cursed who obeyeth not ; and he is blessed who obeys. From these declarations God will not depart." A. C.

5. Only those who are in communion with God can truly understand and approve His judgments. The commandment is intelligently alluded to, and its penalty stated. The correspondence of Judah's condition with that anticipated in the original passage is pregnantly suggested. All the more so that the transgressors did not feel or admit the correspondence. The prophet alone could say, " Amen ;" but he said it emphatically and representatively. How many of God's people find a similar difficulty in acquiescing in His dispensations ? They do not examine themselves, or their conscience is not sufficiently awakened, and consequently they fail to recognize His judgments and to profit by them as was intended. M.

6, 7. " Protesting " is a solemn form of attestation. The Hebrew word is used for witnessing, giving or taking testimony under solemn sanctions. So the Lord had announced to the people the terms of this covenant often and in methods of the greatest solemnity, all along from the day they came out of Egypt unto the time then present. The expression " rising early " is specially significant, and in our prophet quite frequent. (See 7 : 13 ; 25 : 3, 4 ; 35 : 15.) The command, " Proclaim these words, not only in the streets of Jerusalem, but in the cities of Judah," indicates the wide range of his mission and the solemn earnestness of this attempted reform. H. C.

11-17. This paragraph, which contains so much of God's wrath, might very well be expected to follow upon that which goes next before, which contained so much of His people's sin. When God found so much evil among them, we cannot think it strange if it follows, " Therefore I will bring evil upon them " (verse 11) ; the evil of punishment for the evil of sin ; and there is no remedy, no relief ; the decree is gone forth, and the sentence will be executed. H.

18. This gives us a vivid view of the extent of idolatry at this time—idol gods in every city throughout all the land and in every street of Jerusalem. Very concise and expressive is the original—" altars to *that shame*"—that shameful thing, Baal. H. C.

11-13. *Idolatry confounded.* Trouble is a touchstone for religious truth. The idolatry

that is played with in prosperity is found to be useless in adversity. The Jews had regarded mere stocks and stones as their gods. But in the season of real distress they turn from these and cry to the true God to arise and save them. *The ground of confidence which gives way in the hour of need is worse than useless ; it is treacherous and ruinous, and the discovery of its true character confounds those who have relied on it.* A religion which will not stand the test of trouble is a mockery. *Trouble reveals the vanity of an insincere faith.* In trouble we need the true, the real ; all false religiousness, all playing at devotion, breaks down then. If our religion has been vain and ill founded, we are then discovered and made to be ashamed, " like a thief when he is found " (chap. 2 : 26). *There is a deep instinct which cries out for the true God in the hour of distress.* Old memories then revive, scouted faiths reassert themselves, the first cry of the child to his Parent breaks out again involuntarily, and the godless man in his agony groans, " O my God ! "

If we have forsaken God in prosperity we have no right to expect Him to save us in adversity. The religion which we accept in our general life is that to which we should justly look in our hours of need. Here is the natural irony of religion. A man is punished by being left to the protection of the creed of his own choice. It must always be remembered, indeed, that whenever we truly repent and seek God spiritually He will receive and save us (Hos. 6 : 1). But the mere cry for God's help in distress is not repentance, nor is it a spiritual return to God. It is a selfish utterance, and may be made while the heart is still far from God, and the sins which drove us from Him still unrepented of. It would be neither just nor good for us that God should respond to so degraded and unspiritual a prayer. P. C.

14. Jeremiah's prayer shall not help them ; what God had said to him before (chap. 7 : 16) He here says again : " Pray not thou for this people." This is not designed for a command to the prophet so much as for a threatening to the people, that they should have no benefit by the prayers of their friends for them. H.—When judgment continues to rest upon the transgressor, it is not mere vengeance which is represented, but mercy working on the lines of severity. It is God's emphasis upon His commandment which must be heeded. The blessing that is latent in it waits the appearance of a repentance not to be repented of. Like pent-up waters, it will flow in an overwhelming stream when once the

barriers of law have been removed by the sinner's return to God. M.

15. Nothing could be more offensive to God than to see His people polluting His temple with their idol altars and idol worship, thinking to atone for the wickedness of their idolatry by bringing it into God's Temple and for the immorality of their life by keeping up some of the Mosaic ritual services. It was enough to seal their doom that they found their chief joy in doing wickedness. H. C.

16. The Lord called thy name, A green olive tree. Paul plainly alludes to this verse (Rom. 11 : 17). The Jewish nation in its flourishing state is sometimes compared to a vine, sometimes to an olive tree, chiefly because of the fruits of good works which God might justly expect from them, after all the care and pains He had bestowed upon them to make them thrive and fructify. W. Lowth.

16, 17. The fated olive tree. God's comparison of His people to the olive tree. There would have been force in the comparison if applied to any flourishing and fruitful tree, but there was peculiar propriety in directing the thoughts of the people to the olive. The olive was already associated in sacred history with the return of hope after the flood, and doubtless, in the time of Jeremiah, it was one of the most valuable of trees, as it still is, for the richness of its produce and the variety of ways in which that produce meets the common wants of men. The extensive olive groves, composed of trees that reach no great height, and unattractive to a mere casual glance, were yet more to the people than all the cedars of Lebanon. And as the people were led to consider these olive trees, full of vigor, abounding in blossoms, many of which never came to fruit, and yet, after all, left abundance of fruit behind ; as they recollected all the use of the olive—for food, for light, for anointing, for soap-making—the thoughtful among them would feel that God could have employed no better figure to suggest how full Israel was of productivity of the most practical sort.

The destruction of this olive tree. All the wealth that came from this olive tree was being used for bad purposes. The fatness of the soil went into the olive, but the fatness of the olive did not come back to God in grateful and proportionate service. Nay, rather, it was used against Him ; and the harm it did was to some extent measurable by the good it might have done. The axe is laid not only at the root of the tree that brings forth no fruit, but also at the root of the tree that brings forth its fruit to

be used in hostility against Him who planted the tree. Y.

18. The passage (verses 18–23) treats of a new subject, and enters upon it abruptly, as men are wont to speak or write when excited by a sense of danger, and of merciful deliverance. While the prophet was living quietly in his native Anathoth, suspecting no danger, all suddenly the Lord reveals to him that his fellow-citizens there, and even some of his relatives (12 : 6), were plotting his murder. With these facts before us, the sense will be plain. Literally, "The Lord caused me to know, and then I knew ; then He made me see their doings." H. C.

19. We cannot wonder that many of the fathers saw in Jeremiah a type of Christ. His bodily and mental agonies ; his entire subjection to the will of God, though the prophet had to overpower the revoltings of his human will ; his lamentations over the coming troubles of his country, the general opposition to his teaching and the union of priest and people in seeking his death—all form an interesting parallel ; and the idea was naturally suggested by his describing himself as "a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter." No doubt he was emphatically "a man of sorrows." But the comparison must not be pressed too far. Still, this we may say, that of all the prophets, none rises to a higher or more spiritual elevation than Jeremiah, and none is more worthy of such a comparison ; and yet even more true would it be to say that he is an exemplification of the Gospel principle that "God's grace is sufficient" for a man, because God's "strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12 : 9). R. P. S.

20. The Hebrew is not necessarily a prayer, a malediction. It is the simple future, "I shall see ;" I am sure of it, because I have laid open my case before Thee [my God], and so have committed it to thee. The committal is the thing implied. The laying open to God is all that the verb legitimately expresses. But, in such a case, the laying open before God is the preliminary act, and implies the committal. The fact that the Lord had specially apprised him of his danger might well be taken as a guarantee that he would also take care to deal righteously with those wicked persecutors.

21–23. And here the Lord assures His prophet, and directs him to write it out for a warning to other persecutors, that He would terribly punish and utterly exterminate those wicked men of Anathoth who had sought to seal his lips, that he should not speak truthfully the word of the Lord.

Chap. 12. The first six verses treat of one

subject, analogous to that of the next preceding passage (11: 18-23), only that this passage (12: 1-6) seems to touch the history of which both treat at a point somewhat earlier than that. For this represents the prophet as troubled by the prosperity of the wicked (verses 1, 2), as annoyed by their wickedness, and, perhaps, by their opposition to him as the Lord's prophet, and still as not having yet seen the worst, and especially as not yet aware that his own brethren and nearest relatives are plotting his destruction (verses 5, 6). The former passage (11: 18-23), as we have seen, touches the history at a point further on, where the Lord reveals to him the treachery of his friends, puts him in a way to escape their plot, and announces their doom of utter destruction. The rest of the chapter (verses 7-17) seems to have no special connection with the first six verses. H. C.

1-4. Moral difficulties with the providence of God. The tone of this address to Jehovah is strikingly contrasted with that to the men of Anathoth. To them he is as a lion or a brazen wall. To Jehovah he is as a fretful child, ignorant, wilful, perverse, and requiring to be corrected. The tone of the prophet's prayer appears reasonable, considering the character and position of those to whom he refers. And there is a recognition of the righteousness of God to begin with. It is evident, too, that the conscience of the prophet is without offence in the sight of God, and yet there can be no doubt that the language he adopts is not to be justified. He is carried away by excess of zeal, but it is zeal without knowledge, and he himself will be the first bitterly to regret his presumption. It is a perilous thing for any man to attempt to judge his fellows by infallible standards. One thing in the behavior of the prophet was to be commended. He did not conceal these thoughts within himself. He says, "Let me talk with Thee," conscious that in this openness of soul lay his moral safety. A few minutes' honest communion with God will tap many a festering sore and correct many a subtle error of spirit and life. The last lesson of Divine revelation is not severity, but love. M.

Jeremiah sees the difficulty, but it does not drive him from faith in the justice of God. Religion makes constant demands on faith—the personal faith of trust in the character of God where appearances are against what we believe that character to be. Confidence in the unwavering righteousness of God will help us to look for certain indications of a solution of the difficulty occasioned by the prosperity of the wicked. Right must and will be done, and if

it is not yet accomplished it will be ultimately. From the character of God we may thus reason to His certain action (Gen. 18: 25). Hence we have an argument in favor of *future rectification*. Jeremiah expects it to come even in this life, though it is long deferred (verse 3). The Christian looks for it in the great judgment, and the fruits of this in the life to come. The difficulty may be lessened even for the present by the reflection that *material prosperity is not real prosperity*. It may be well for a good man to suffer. Prosperity may be an evil. True welfare consists not in success, not in security from calamity, but in inward peace, in progress in the Divine life. *Adeney*.

2. Grow, bring forth fruit. There is in this world a perpetual progress of character. God must interpose violently to prevent this principle in the nature of things, to prevent this law of a moral being from being accomplished. Everything, both good and evil, hastens to its perfection. In depravity there is no standing still, no amelioration, no change, as to the pith of the character and destiny, but a constant, ceaseless approximation, amid all apparent forms and changes, to the one final result. There is everlasting growth. Evil cannot stop any more than good can stop. A depraved being goes on to the perfection of *his* character by just as sure a law, and with just as certain a progress as a good being to the perfection of his. It cannot be otherwise. *Cheever*.

Personal religion involves growth in grace; so that where there is no growth, although there may be interest in religious subjects, and keenness about controversies, and a perception of the importance of Divine truth, and a warm defence of orthodoxy, there personal religion is unknown. To say that personal religion is characterized by growth is only another form of saying that the man who has it is spiritually alive. There is no organic life without growth in nature; and there is no spiritual life without growth in grace, no *continuous state of life*. The question whether any of us has personal religion resolves itself into a question whether he has in him a principle of spiritual growth; and spiritual growth implies spiritual life. E. M. G.

Christian steadfastness means, at bottom, the augmenting supremacy of the personal Christ in the soul; growing convictions of His supreme worth, deepening attachment to His person, enlarging drafts upon his Spirit for vitality, progressive enfranchisement from set rule and form that bind the flesh: "For me to live is Christ." "The kingdom of God is not meat

and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." We are sons not of the bondwoman, but of the free, having a career before us, a destiny to work at which transcends the boundaries of fleshly virtues and rises into the dignity of free and conscious sonship with God. The Christian impulse must organize into Christian living and growth, or it will either evaporate or degenerate into mechanical conformity to a man-made code, a mere slavery to form and rule, while the devil holds the whip, drives Christ out of our lives and leaves us hollow shapes of pretentious godliness, a ghastly mockery of true righteousness. *W. W. Flaris.*

3. He appeals to God: "Thou knowest my heart toward Thee." We are as our hearts are, and our hearts are good or bad, according as they are or are not toward God; and this is that therefore concerning which we should examine ourselves, that we may approve ourselves to God. The cognizance to which he appeals: "Thou knowest me better than I know myself, not by hearsay or report, for Thou hast seen me not with a transient glance, but Thou hast tried my heart." God's knowing of us is as clear and exact and certain as if He had made the most strict scrutiny. The God with whom we have to do perfectly knows how our hearts are toward Him. He knows both the guile of the hypocrite and the sincerity of the upright. **II.**

4. Because they said, He shall not see our last end. That is, He will not concern Himself about rewarding or punishing us hereafter. The inference which bad men are apt to draw from God's past forbearance is, that He is totally regardless of the moral conduct of mankind. Hence, promising themselves the same impunity in future which they have hitherto experienced, they are led to a free indulgence of all their vicious inclinations. Accordingly the Psalmist, complaining, as the prophet does here, of the prosperity of the wicked, represents their behavior and their principles in terms exactly similar. (See Ps. 91:5, 6, 7.) *Blayney.*

5. The close connection of verse 6 with this verse 5 requires us to interpret this as spoken to the prophet, and as implying that greater toils and conflicts await him, and therefore it is not well for him to faint under these of lesser severity. He has already encountered some persecution; much more and worse is near at hand. **H. C.**—If the injuries done him by the men of Anathoth made such an impression upon him, what would he do when the princes and chief priests at Jerusalem should set upon him

with their power, as they did afterward (chaps. 20:2; 32:2). **H.**

The expressions are proverbial, but clear and forcible. If in a race with footmen he found himself wearied, how could he stand a race with horses? If in a quiet, peaceful land, where he had no reason to fear dangerous animals, he was in terror, how would he do along the thickets of Jordan, where the lions had their lairs? This phrase translated "the swelling of Jordan" occurs elsewhere in this prophet (49:19; 50:44); also in Zech. 11:3). In Jeremiah it is uniformly rendered as here, but in Zechariah, "the pride of Jordan." In each of these three passages it is thought of as the place where lions had their coverts. Hence, the phrase cannot refer to the rise of the waters of the Jordan, but must refer to the thickets and shrubbery which might be considered the pride and glory of Jordan. The original word means that which is high, excellent, distinguished. The connection of verse 5 with what precedes may seem abrupt. It is rather thought than expressed. The tone of the prophet's remarks throughout verses 1-4 reveals a mind much exercised with the wickedness of men who were probably thought of by him as his personal enemies and persecutors. The Lord proceeds here somewhat abruptly to apprise him that worse enemies and sterner conflicts await him. **H. C.**

The prophet of God was weary-hearted. Like Job, like the writer of the thirty-seventh psalm, like John the Baptist, he was sore perplexed at God's dealings. The wicked prospered, the righteous were cast down. Hence he sadly asks, "Wherefore doth?" etc. (verse 1). Now, God answers such questionings as these in different ways. Sometimes by showing His servant the true state of the ungodly, making him "to understand their end." Sometimes by revealing to the righteous the vast superiority of their portion over that of the ungodly. Sometimes by gently soothing the ruffled spirit. At other times, as here, by rousing rebuke and sharp remonstrance, bidding him bethink himself, if he broke down under these comparatively small trials, how would he bear up when much more terrible ones had to be endured? If running with "footmen" was too much for him, then how would he "contend" with the swift "horses"? If he could feel secure only in a quiet land, how would he do in a region full of peril like that of the jungle-land, the lair of the lion and other fierce beasts of prey, which stretched along the banks of the Jordan? Greater trials were to come to him than he had

as yet known ; how would he meet them if he failed in the presence of these lesser ones? C.

God has chosen to let the great and learned sometimes fall, to show us what is in man ; and to hold up the timid woman and the feeble child, to show us what is in God. But what preparation have we for trials, losses, fears, pains, bereavements and death ? If we can ill bear the daily crosses of life, and are easily affrighted by the sneers or the inconveniences that befall us ; if amid these days of easy and honorable Christianity we find it so hard to be Christians, how will it be when we come into the billows of mighty conflict ? J. W. A.

Holy habits of living store away reserves of strength which make one secure from the pressure of life's trials. One whose daily life is careless is always weak. But one who habitually serves God and walks in the paths of uprightness and obedience grows strong in the fountains of His being. Exercise develops all the powers of life. Doing good continually adds to one's capacity for doing good. Victory in temptation puts new fibre into the victor's arm. Thus he who forms habits of well-doing is continually piling away in his soul reserves of strength by which he will be ready to meet the sudden shocks of danger or trial or the unexpected demands of duty. J. R. M.

6. The general sentiment of this verse is, that his own brothers of the same father and family were dealing treacherously with him, speaking fair words, but plotting foulest deeds. This would be the severest of all his trials, corresponding to the race with horses or to meeting the lions that spring forth from the thickets on the Jordan. H. C.

7-17. God expressly challenges the national calamities as the result of His own special determination and judgment. He had discarded His people for their malicious behavior toward Him, and they were therefore given up to the outrage and devastation of fierce and merciless invaders (verses 7-13). At last He promises them a restoration in future, and threatens punishment upon their heathen neighbors who had oppressed them ; but with this reservation, that such of these as would come over to His established worship, He would receive and incorporate into His Church ; but the unbelieving part should be utterly extirpated. *Blayney*.

14-17. The prophets sometimes, in God's name, delivered messages both of judgment and mercy to the nations that bordered on the land of Israel ; but here is a message to them all in general, who had in their turns been one way or other injurious to God's people, had

either oppressed them or triumphed in their being oppressed. H.

Mercy and judgment. In these verses we have one of the "larger words" which make the whole world's testament of salvation and life. The threatenings are stern, and will be executed to the letter ; but the promises seem to transcend the immediate occasion. A gate of hope and redemption was herein opened to multitudes who at that date were not included in the covenant of Israel. The conditions upon which their possible comprehension within the future Israel is based are moral and spiritual, and therefore truly universal. M.

The tide that has no ebb, but ever flows. Such is the grace of God. The tide has never gone back ; it has been but delayed. Wise and holy fatherly love is at the root of all things, and is the key which unlocks, as none else will, all the problems of life. That love held His people down to the sufferings they had to endure until the evil mind departed from them, and so it holds humanity down and individual souls down to what they have to endure until they be changed in the spirit of their minds. But all this while the tide of His gracious purpose is rising, and soon that which hinders shall be taken out of the way. Judah was to go into captivity, but Judah was to be "plucked out" from thence, and that is but a pattern of God's dealings with us all.

But not only has this tide no ebb, it flows on evermore. Not only was Judah to be restored, but forgiveness and salvation are offered to her "evil neighbors" (verse 14), who had done her harm. God's purpose in the election of some is not the reprobation of the rest, but the salvation of all. "In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The "evil neighbors" had corrupted Judah (verse 16), and they had persecuted her (verse 14) ; but now the set time to favor them also had come, and salvation is offered to them (verse 16). Thus the tide of God's grace flows on evermore, and where it seemed as if it would never come. From all which we may learn : The redemption of the world is the purpose of God. But every nation and people in their own order. The elect are the first-fruits ; those nearest to them come next. If any refuse, their national life is lost (verse 17). But the unfaithfulness of man shall not make the faith of God of none effect. Let us take this tide at its flood ; it will lead us on to life eternal. It is the "tide in the affairs of men" which calls us to launch forth upon it, that it may bear us to never-ending bliss. C.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTER XIII.

13:1 THUS said the LORD unto me, Go, and buy thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy
 2 loins, and put it not in water. So I bought a girdle according to the word of the LORD, and
 3 put it upon my loins. And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying,
 4 Take the girdle that thou hast bought, which is upon thy loins, and arise, go to Euphrates,
 5 and hide it there in a hole of the rock. So I went, and hid it by Euphrates, as the LORD
 6 commanded me. And it came to pass after many days, that the LORD said unto me, Arise,
 go to Euphrates, and take the girdle from thence, which I commanded thee to hide there.
 7 Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had hid
 8 it : and, behold, the girdle was marred, it was profitable for nothing. Then the word of the
 9 LORD came unto me, saying, Thus saith the LORD, After this manner will I mar the pride of
 10 Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem. This evil people, which refuse to hear my words,
 which walk in the stubbornness of their heart, and are gone after other gods to serve them, and
 11 to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is profitable for nothing. For as the girdle
 cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and
 the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD ; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a
 12 name, and for a praise, and for a glory : but they would not hear. Therefore thou shalt
 speak unto them this word : Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Every bottle shall be
 filled with wine : and they shall say unto thee, Do we not know that every bottle shall be
 13 filled with wine ? Then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will fill
 all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings that sit upon David's throne, and the priests,
 14 and the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, with drunkenness. And I will dash
 them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the LORD : I will not
 pity, nor spare, nor have compassion, that I should not destroy them.
 15, 16 Hear ye, and give ear ; be not proud : for the LORD hath spoken. Give glory to the
 LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark
 mountains ; and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it
 17 gross darkness. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret for *your* pride ; and
 mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD's flock is taken cap-
 18 tive. Say thou unto the king and to the queen-mother, Humble yourselves, sit down : for
 19 your headtires are come down, even the crown of your glory. The cities of the South are
 shut up, and there is none to open them : Judah is carried away captive all of it ; it is wholly
 carried away captive.
 20 Lift up your eyes, and behold them that come from the north : where is the flock that was
 21 given thee, thy beautiful flock ? What wilt thou say, when he shall set *thy* friends over thee
 as head, seeing thou thyself hast instructed them against thee ? shall not sorrows take hold
 22 of thee, as of a woman in travail ? And if thou say in thine heart, Wherefore are these
 things come upon me ? for the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy
 23 heels suffer violence. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? then
 24 may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. Therefore will I scatter them, as the
 25 stubble that passeth away, by the wind of the wilderness. This is thy lot, the portion meas-
 ured unto thee from me, saith the LORD : because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in
 26 falsehood. Therefore will I also discover thy skirts upon thy face, and thy shame shall
 27 appear. I have seen thine abominations, even thine adulteries, and thy neighings, the lewd-
 ness of thy whoredom, on the hills in the field. Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem ! thou wilt not
 be made clean ; how long shall it yet be ?

Chap. 13. This chapter is obviously one entire message. It appears here without date. The allusions to the deep infatuation that precedes destruction (verse 13) ; to the destruction itself (verses 14, 16) ; to the humiliation of the king and queen (verse 18) ; to being carried captive (verses 17, 19)—all conspire to point to the short reign of Jehoiachin as the most probable date. (Cf. 2 K. 24 : 10-16.) The prominence given to the king's mother in both this history

(2 K. 24 : 15) and this prophecy (verse 18) favors this date. The prophecy points significantly to *pride* as the fundamental sin of the people. To mar this pride was the thing specially signified by this "rotten girdle." Over this pride the prophet would weep sore, as the procuring cause of their ruin (verse 17). It was this that hardened their heart against the efforts made by the Lord, through His prophet, to dissuade them from idolatry, and draw them back to true piety. H. C.

This chapter contains a single and distinct prophecy, which, under two symbols, a linen girdle left to rot, and all vessels being filled with wine, foretells the utter destruction that was destined to fall upon the whole Jewish nation, including individuals of every rank and denomination (verses 15-21); and the cause of all the evils is assigned in the general corruption and profligacy of manners that prevailed without a prospect of amendment (verse 22 to the end). The particular mention of the joint downfall of the king and queen (verse 18) seems to justify the opinion which ascribes this prophecy to the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, whose fate with that of his queen is, in like manner, noticed together. *Blaney*.

1-7. This statement is entirely plain. The great question discussed among critics is, whether this was a mere vision or a fact of actual life. I accept it is a fact, because it is affirmed to be a fact in most explicit terms; because mere visions are never put in such terms, but in terms of a very different sort—*e.g.*, "I saw;" "the Lord showed me;" "I was in the Spirit and saw," etc.; also because analogous cases in this prophet must be taken as actual facts—*e.g.*, the breaking of a potter's vessel in Tophet (19 : 1-10), and the making of symbolic yokes (27 : 2 and 28 : 10). H. C.

1. *Put it not in water.* God explains, at verse 11, what was meant by the symbol of the girdle or sash worn about the loins—*viz.*, His people Israel, whom He purchased and redeemed of old, and attached to Himself by a special covenant; that as a girdle serveth for an ornament to the wearer, so they should be subservient to the honor and glory of His name. But, it is added, "they would not hear" or conform to His intentions; therefore being polluted with the guilt of their disobedience, they were in that state, and on that very account, to be carried into captivity; conformably to which the prophet was directed "not to put the girdle in water"—that is, not to wash it, but to leave it in that filthiness which it had contracted in wearing. *Blaney*.

7. It is expressly said, He did as the Lord commanded him, and thus gave a signal proof of his obedience, to shame the stubbornness of a disobedient people; the toil of his journey would be very proper to signify both the pains they took to corrupt themselves with their idolatries, and the sad fatigue of their captivity; and Euphrates being the river of Babylon, which was to be the place of their bondage, was a material circumstance in this sign. H.

8-11. In these verses the Lord gives the explanation of the symbolic act. It represented the fact that He would mar the pride of Judah, and hinted at the agencies He would employ for this purpose—*e.g.*, sending them into captivity to the Euphrates. As a man puts on a girdle to bind his otherwise loose garments close to his person, so the Lord had put on His chosen people and bound them to Himself, and would joyfully have held them in this relation if they had honored and loved Him; but they would not. Hence, He had no alternative left Him but to tear off this girdle and hide it away by the Euphrates, till, humbled under their affliction, they should lie low before Him and plead for mercy. The phraseology (verse 11) shows vividly how much the Lord would have honored His people before the world with prosperity, and would have counted their prosperity an honor and a praise to Himself, if they had adhered to Him in fidelity, love and obedience. No blessings are too great for God to give to His willing, trustful people, provided only they are so humble that He can bless them safely, and so dutiful that He can bless them with honor to Himself.

12. All the people of the land, their king, princes, corrupt priests and false prophets especially, must be filled with drunkenness in the moral sense of mad infatuation. The main point of the verse, however, is to bring out the insulting retort of the people: Could not you tell us something that we do not already know?

13, 14. This use of the idea of drunkenness to represent the analogous infatuation that both naturally and judicially precedes destruction occurs very frequently in the prophets, drawn out most fully by Jeremiah (chap. 25), but appearing in Isa. 51 : 17-21; 63 : 6 and often in the minor prophets. It is, indeed, a terrible fact in the providential government of God over nations, and sometimes over individuals as well, that when they scorn His wisdom and scoff at His word, He turns their wisest counsels into foolishness, gives up their heart to madness, and so lets them rush and reel on to the drunkard's doom.

14. The last clause reads literally, "will not have mercy *so as not to* destroy"—i.e., the cherished mercy and kindness of His nature shall not prevent His destroying them—a startling truth, which heaven-defiant sinners, who rest their vain hope in the assumed mercy of God, would do well to heed. H. C.

15. "Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud." Why should human beings be proud, seeing that all their clothing is second-hand, worn first by the lower animals before it is worn by them? The silken robe of a king's daughter was woven by a worm, and the ermine that adorns the mantle of the noblest office originally protected an insignificant weasel from the cold. It is not the outward dress made by other creatures that dignifies the life, but that which truly belongs to the man himself—the inward clothing which he has formed by his own pure thoughts and lofty ideals, the habit of a saintly life. The cloak brought from fairy-land in King Arthur's court was a gift for the purest and fairest; and it is this cloak which expresses the inward nature, and is in harmony with it, that is of any value. The robe of Chosroes, made of cloth of gold and adorned with jewels of inestimable value, covered a base and despicable nature. The sheepskins and goatskins in which the early Christian confessors wandered about, destitute, afflicted, tormented, covered the noblest natures, of whom the world was not worthy. And Christ Himself wears the same robe in which His people imbibe His spirit and imitate His example. *Macmillan.*

Pride is a false estimate of one's self. It lives "on the petty pre-eminences which here for a little lift one mortal an inch or two higher than another—an extra handful of gold, a better education, a longer pedigree, a title, a serener and less tempted life," or official distinctions. But pride dies where "self-respect is born," since self-respect teaches one to rightly estimate one's self; to look on the inherent value of one's immortal nature, on the soul's immeasurable capacities, intellectual and moral, and on its relations to its Creator and Redeemer. It does not value itself on the magnitude of its merits, but because of its delightful and honorable relations to the Lord of the universe. It places its possessor in the balances of the sanctuary, weighing himself not by weights of human invention, but by those which bear the stamp of the court of heaven. And such self-respect is near akin to humility, since it perceives then no man's worth is self-derived, but is all the gift of Him whose name is love. *Dykes.*

Truth provokes those whom it does not enlighten and convert. The proud man cannot bear to be told that God owes him nothing; and hereby he renders himself still more unworthy of His grace; he rises up against His Physician, instead of turning his anger against his pride and desiring the cure of it. *Quesnel.*

15, 16. *The Lord hath spoken.* Should not mortal man bend his ear to listen when God deigns to speak? Shall he suffer his pride to be his ruin, as if it were beneath his dignity to hear his Maker? "Give glory to the Lord your God," by humbling yourselves before Him, by fully acknowledging His justice and His right to reign and by deeply repenting of your sins against Him. All this and more must be implied in giving glory to the Lord your God. A case in point, for illustration, occurs in the words of Joshua to Achan: "I pray thee, my son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him" (Josh. 7 : 19). On the vital question of right and wrong between the sinner and God, the sinner gives due glory to God only when he humbles himself and confesses that the wrong is wholly on his side, the right wholly with God. The Lord enforces this appeal through His prophet by implying that a short time only remains ere, otherwise, judgment without mercy must be their doom. Hasten, "before He cause darkness," in the sense of deeper calamity; "before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains"—lost wanderers through unknown mountain forests, daylight all gone, where pitfalls and precipices lie in wait, and there can be but a step between you and death. "And while ye look for light"—in vain hope, anticipating the break of day or some rift in the thick clouds that close in heavily on your path—God shall turn your darkness of night and of cloud into the darkness of death-shade, and make it utter blackness of darkness. This graphic picture of misery and woe coming on the proud sinners of His time had its eye upon that fearful war just then impending, with its fatal results. H. C.

16. Light and the day are here as elsewhere the emblems of those Divine influences which ensure safety, joy and life; darkness and the night, the absence of those influences, betokening peril, misery and death. The dark mountains, with their chasm-filled passes, represent the paths of the world, with its concealed and perilous abysses, in which the sinful soul is wandering. They are the places of temptation and danger, from which God's presence is banished and in which there are chasms, into which the

soul is liable to fall and perish. And it is *these places*, with which the world is filled, and through which the godless are groping in sin-blinded darkness looking for light—these places of peril that the prophet declares God will suddenly convert into the shadow of death by overturning the foot of the wanderer, and make a perpetual gross darkness by precipitating his fall into their dark and profound abysses. Under this effective figure is shadowed forth a *momentous fact* as a powerful inducement for the sinful soul at once to give glory to God by repentance and a return to the way of holiness—the fact of its *momentary* liability to fall into the fathomless depths and darkness of the second death. B.

When, overwhelmed with a sense of corruption, I see before me “dark mountains” of trouble and the terrors of the grave, the eye of infinite goodness, brighter than the Shekinah of old, glances upon me from the depths of eternity. It is the smile of the King Immortal from the throne of grace. I see in it free love, the infinite merits of Christ, riches of mercy and of grace, which compel me to look with amaze. I am made to listen to the still, small voice that follows—a voice such as Elijah heard. It announces to me the mysteries of the holy of holies. “Lo, I come, in the volume of the Book it is written of Me.” “I came to seek and to save that which is lost.” I rise from the depths of despair, and no longer “stumble upon the dark mountains.” C. *Evans*.

Let the beams of the Divine character be shed on the unholy mind, and its darkness would not only not comprehend, it would repel, that brightness; it would recoil from such a contrast to its own nature. But to come into immediate contact with a holy God, this must be, to those who love darkness, insufferable pain, in proportion to the fulness of that light! On the contrary, those who love holiness, those who war against sin, those who have repented a thousand times of the evil that dwells within them, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, to them holiness must be heaven; they will then reach the goal, rest in the haven where they would be; and, like the Psalmist who speaks their mind, “be satisfied when they awake in the likeness of God, and behold His face in righteousness!” R. *Hall*.

17. The spirit of this affectionate prophet stands before us here in exquisite beauty. He longed to have the people hear, but he could not compel them. All he could do to induce them he would most cheerfully and gladly.

But if his best endeavors fail, there is one resort left him; he can find some secret place to weep over their guilty pride. He understands full well the form which this ruin will assume; “the Lord’s flock carried away captive.” This public statement to the people, backed up, we must suppose, by his known character for a tender spirit and a tearful eye, was in place here as one hopeful means of making an impression upon the people. It was a testimony to his honest belief in their danger, and to the solicitude and even anguish of his heart in view of their certain ruin unless they should repent. H. C.

20. The Church of God is His flock, His “beautiful flock.” Its members are very dear to Him, “purchased with His own blood.” The Church is given, entrusted, to pastors. When Christ ascended up on high He gave some “pastors.” This method of ordering His Church is the one He has willed. His blessing has evidently rested on it. What does not the Church of God owe to her faithful pastors? But whatever their character they cannot but have great influence. They are trusted by the people. They have received special gifts for their work in the form of mental and moral endowments. They are much prayed for. They are specially set apart for the charge of the Church of God. They have every inducement to fidelity. Faithful, the love of their charge will gather round them; the fear of God will dwell within them; the crown of life awaits them. And these mighty motives, acting upon hearts already prepared by God’s grace and devoted to this high office, have for the most part secured a great degree of fidelity in it. But there has been at times great unfaithfulness. The Church has suffered in numbers, in purity of doctrine, in consistency of life, in spirituality of character. And if it has been through the negligence and unfaithfulness of the pastor, who shall deliver him from the charge of blood-guiltiness which will lie at his door? What will he answer when the question is addressed to him, as one day it surely will be, “Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?” C.

Christ has made over to each of us a special portion of His vineyard, to cultivate for immortality. For that definite allotment, and for every soul therein, we shall have to answer in the day of wrath. Those are awful words of the prophet: “Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock? What wilt thou say when He shall visit upon thee?” Hundreds, yea, thousands, have passed through

the hands of some of us ; what report of our ministry have they brought into the world of spirits ? Oh, brethren ! of a truth they are no slight matters, these souls of men with which we have to deal ! Eternal destinies are suspended on our hourly work ; every forgetful day is a robbery of Him whose chief reward for all "the travail of His soul" is in the multitude what we are to train for Him to glory. Shall we disappoint Him, and, as far as in us lies, neutralize the redeeming work of the cross ? Called to be the stewards of His household, shall we lay waste His inheritance, or what is as criminal, suffer it to lie fallow and unproductive ? He has promised us His unfailing help in prosecuting the work He began ; He has promised us a glory eminent above others even in a world where all is glory—"rulers over many cities," "the joy of our Lord," "the brightness of the stars forever and ever." May we daily see before us the crown, and willingly bear the cross we call upon others to carry ! May we keep before our thoughts that great and final day of visitation, more awful far than all these its earthly images ; "when the Chief Shepherd shall appear," even the "Shepherd and Bishop of our souls," to inspect the accounts of our stewardship, to scrutinize our fidelity, to require the blood of the unwarned sinner at the hand of the faithless watchman, to recompense with rest everlasting the humble and laborious minister of truth and peace ! *Archer Butler.*

It will be seen that this was a question for flocks as well as for shepherds. Rulers are responsible for right leading, but subjects and followers are not altogether as sheep, that they should blindly follow those in formal authority. Truth has not been put within the formal shepherd's exclusive protection. We must take care whom we follow. It is a delusion to suppose that we can hand ourselves over spiritually to the guidance of any one less than Christ. Others may help and suggest ; only He can command. Paul came to his hearers with arguments and persuasions, laying before them the truth, which they were able to receive because it was the truth, not because the authority of the speaker made it true. All New Testament preaching goes on the assumption that every one can be fully persuaded in his own mind. The same Scriptures are open to reader as to preacher. None can have their eternal interests perilled except by their own negligence. Y.

21. The idea is, that they had accepted the gods of those foreign nations, and had thus

brought themselves into relations of acknowledged inferiority and subjection, so that now they could in no wise complain if the Lord put the princes of those nations in power over their whole land. When they should come to experience this natural result of their idolatry, would not the pangs of travail seize upon them ?

23. The stubbornness of their hearts ; the strength and persistence of this spirit of idolatry ; the extreme difficulty of effecting a moral change, and the entire failure of all efforts thus far made to reclaim the people—are tersely expressed by this analogy. H. C.

Then may ye also do good, etc. The meaning of this is, that they who are accustomed to do evil will find the work of repentance and reformation to be not indeed impossible, but extremely difficult. That the words are to be thus understood appears from the whole chapter, which contains terrible denunciations against the Jews of evils which should come upon them for their impiety. These threats are mixed with exhortations to repentance, and then follow the words, "Can the Ethiopian," etc., which must not, therefore, be taken as a declaration that they could not possibly repent ; for then the prophet ought not to have pressed them, in the same discourse, to amend their ways, and to give glory to the Lord, before He caused darkness, and before their feet stumbled, and they should fall to rise no more.

Jortin.

To cease to do evil we have not only to stay the hand, but to purify the heart. To cease to do evil we must cease to think it, to feel it and to conceive it. So helpless is the sinner when he stands face to face with the problem of reformation. Effort after effort is made and fails. It is bound to fail because the source of the wrong-doing has not been rectified. *To change himself*—who is capable of this feat ? M.

Men *habituate* themselves to sin. Habit is second nature. The sin which is wilfully chosen becomes a tyrannous habit. We are coloring our very being by the tone of our thoughts and actions. What we do to-day, that we will be to-morrow. We are the result of our own past deeds. He who speaks or acts a lie becomes a liar ; he who indulges in impurity becomes an unclean being ; he who follows selfish impulses becomes a creature of selfishness. Thus every man is building up a habitation for his soul by his own deeds. P. C.

Active habits are formed by the repetition of voluntary acts. It is an ultimate fact in our constitution, that repetition, practice, use, pro-

duces always facility in doing the acts repeated, and sometimes, in addition, a tendency to do them. M. H.—From our very faculty of habits, passive impressions, by being repeated, grow weaker. Thoughts, by often passing through the mind, are felt less sensibly; being accustomed to danger begets intrepidity—that is, lessens fear; to distress lessens the passion of pity; to instances of others' mortality lessens the sensible apprehension of our own. And from these two observations together—that practical habits are formed and strengthened by repeated acts, and that passive impressions grow weaker by being repeated upon us—it must follow that active habits may be gradually forming and strengthening by a course of acting upon such and such motives and excitements, while these motives and excitements themselves are by proportionable degrees growing less sensible—that is, are continually less and less sensibly felt, even as the active habits strengthen. *Bp. Butler.*

Love increases the power of loving, just by continuance in loving. Hate grows malignantly venomous before one knows how much his better nature is overcome; so that, at the last moment, a wicked man discovers he is not under his own control. What he likes, he must continue to like; what he dislikes, he must continue to dislike. To will is present with him, perhaps, but how to perform that which is good, he finds not; the evil, which he would not do, he does; he recognizes, then, a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin. He has educated and exercised his affections, until now they defy him: they are his despot, and he is their slave. *C. S. Robinson.*

Repeated acts become principles of action, and every man is the creature of his own past life. If nature alone—treacherous and degraded nature—is silent in denouncing sin—if she has no instinctive power to arouse *herself*, what shall she be when doubly and trebly indurated by habit; when the malformed limb becomes *ossified*; when that faculty which was destined to be, under Divine guidance, the antagonist of nature, “a second nature,” as it is truly called, to reform, and resist, and overlay the first, is perverted into the traitorous auxiliary of its corruption? We know not ourselves sinners, because from infancy we have breathed the atmosphere of sin; and we now breathe it, as we do the outward air, unceasingly, yet with scarcely a consciousness of the act! A man lives in the frigid formalism of external relig-

ion, or in the habitual *neglect* of God (itself a sin, and the parent of all sin), until it seems almost impossible to separate the habit from life itself; to live at all is to live *thus*; and he as little dreams of asking himself, can it indeed be true that he is a sinner calmly travelling the pathway to ruin, as he does of seriously inquiring whether his heart beats, or whether his hair turns gray with years. The process has been so constant as to be forgotten, and has at length become almost equally independent of voluntary effort. He sins, so to speak, mechanically. The terrible power of irreligion, become thus habitual, to blind men to the momentous peril of their daily state, is above all evinced in this—that every form of exhortation or appeal is weak to break the lethargy; yet not at all from any unbelief of the facts or doctrines stated, but from an obstinate refusal or inability to imagine that they can have the remotest reference to the hearer himself. *Archer Butler.*

The disease that is inveterate is generally thought incurable. Those that have been long accustomed to sin have shaken off the restraints of fear and shame; their consciences are seared, the habits of sin are confirmed, it pleads prescription, and it is just with God to give those up to their own hearts' lusts that have long refused to give up themselves to His grace. Sin is the blackness of the soul, the deformity of it; it is its spot, the discoloring of it; it is natural to us, we were shapen in it, so that we cannot get clear of it by any power of our own; but there is an almighty grace that is able to change the Ethiopian's skin, and that grace shall not be wanting to those that in a sense of their need of it seek it earnestly, and improve it faithfully. H.

Observe that the impossibility referred to is a *natural* one. It is not said that under no circumstances whatever can a man accustomed to do evil be enabled to do good. The thing affirmed is that the power of habit and custom is so strong that he cannot turn himself. If we are inclined to doubt this, and indulge in that glorification of human nature which is at once so easy and so perilous, we have only to think of the illustrations here employed. It is vain to discuss with a man who is determined to magnify the power of the natural man toward that which is right and good. The better plan is to assure one's own heart of the truth which God would make plain by these illustrations of His own giving. If any one asserted that an Ethiopian could change his skin or a leopard his spots, he would be reckoned a fool past arguing with. But there are multi-

tudes who think it is very good advice to tell the poor slave of worldliness and passion to be a man and exert the strength of his will and turn away from evil. Now, what God says here by His prophet is that every such attempt must end in disappointment. No doubt there are certain times and stages in life when it is hard to accept such a view. It is a humbling and limiting view, one which exhibits in such an uncompromising way our weakness. But the sooner we come to take such a view—to take it practically and not in a mere speculative manner—to feel that the way of self-recovery and self-perfecting is closed against us, the better it will be for us.

The consequent need of a gracious intervention. This is not stated here, but we know that it is meant to be remembered. In all such emphatic assertions of human inability there lies the suggestion that we may look confidently and ought to look promptly for abundance of Divine help. God puts His hand on our mouths to stop all proud words, but at the same time He would lead us to lay hold of His promises and be filled with His strength. A clear vision of our own inability means a clear vision of the need of Divine intervention, and a clear vision of the need of Divine intervention may be expected to prepare for an equally clear vision of the reality of that intervention. That which measures the impossibilities in the corrupted natural man helps to measure the reasonable purposes and expectations of the man who is renewed by the Spirit of God. Y.

Self-reformation is impossible. Sin is not a mere defilement to be washed off. It is ingrained. It is in the blood, in the life, in the nature. Action is according to character. If the character is corrupt, so must be the action. It is true we are free to do as we will, but so long as our nature is corrupt we shall will to do evil, because the will is part of the nature. But apart from the vexed question of the freedom of the will, every man is conscious of the difficulty of overcoming opposing habits, even when his will is roused against them. When he would do good evil is present with him, and this evil is so strong that it can only be regarded as a law of (corrupted) nature (Rom. 7:21-23). *Adeney.*

Sin not only corrupts the springs of a man's moral life, but paralyzes all his nobler powers, robs him of the ability to act out the better in-

stincts of his nature. The voice of natural conscience may not be wholly silenced, the natural heart may not be utterly destitute of good impulses; but there is no redeeming power in these. As well expect the darkness to give birth to light, and life to spring spontaneously out of death, as suppose that a sin-loving, sin-hardened man will of himself forsake his evil ways. He will never be able by his own hand "to pluck the vicious quitch of blood and custom wholly out of him." The complete moral helplessness of humanity was made abundantly evident before the full revelation of Gospel grace. It was when we were "without strength" that Christ "died for the ungodly."

The wondrous efficacy of the regenerating power of God. The most defiled and degraded nature may be transformed by the touch of Him who made it. Even the skin of the Ethiopian and the leopard's spots must yield to the sovereignty of the Divine energy. Deep-rooted and habitual as the evil in a man's heart and life may be, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth him from it, and when the Spirit of Christ moulds the substance of his being he becomes "a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). W.—A true sorrow for sin may be induced in answer to prayer, by the study of Scripture, and the contemplation of Christ; but it is always the work of the Holy Spirit. When that grace, however, has once been attained, it is open to the sinner to reverse the process by which he has been enslaved. After conversion evil habit will assert itself, and can only be met by constant dependence upon Divine grace and constant effort after holiness. The good habit formed by repeated and regular actions according to the law of God is the best antidote to the evil one. M.

26, 27. These figures have occurred already (2:23, 24 and 3:2). They are fearfully significant of the shamelessness of her idolatries and the depth of moral corruption which they involved. Oh, if Jerusalem would only consent to be made clean! After how long shall it be? The prophet longs for the distant day when the processes of Divine judgment shall have taken effect, and the nation shall be once more washed clean of this great pollution, incurred by her worship of idol gods. H. C.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTERS XIV., XV.

14 : 1 THE word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought.

- 2 Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish, they sit in black upon the ground ; and
 3 the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. And their nobles send their little ones to the waters : they
 come to the pits, and find no water ; they return with their vessels empty : they are ashamed
 4 and confounded, and cover their heads. Because of the ground which is chapt, for that no
 5 rain hath been in the land, the plowmen are ashamed, they cover their heads. Yea, the hind
 6 also in the field calveth, and forsaketh *her young*, because there is no grass. And the wild
 asses stand on the bare heights, they pant for air like jackals ; their eyes fail, because there
 is no herbage.
- 7 Though our iniquities testify against us, work thou for thy name's sake, O LORD : for our
 8 backslidings are many ; we have sinned against thee. O thou hope of Israel, the saviour
 thereof in the time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a sojourner in the land, and as a
 9 wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night ? Why shouldest thou be as a man
 astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save ? yet thou, O LORD, art in the midst of us, and
 we are called by thy name ; leave us not.
- 10 Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Even so have they loved to wander ; they have not
 refrained their feet : therefore the LORD doth not accept them ; now will he remember their
 11 iniquity, and visit their sins. And the LORD said unto me, Pray not for this people for *their*
 12 good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry ; and when they offer burnt offering and
 oblation, I will not accept them : but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine,
 13 and by the pestilence. Then said I, Ah, Lord God ! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye
 shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine ; but I will give you assured peace in
 14 this place. Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name : I sent
 them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake I unto them : they prophesy unto
 you a lying vision, and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their own heart.
- 15 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I
 sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land : By sword and
 16 famine shall those prophets be consumed. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be
 cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword ; and they shall have
 none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters : for I will pour
 17 their wickedness upon them. And thou shalt say this word unto them, Let mine eyes run
 down with tears night and day, and let them not cease ; for the virgin daughter of my people
 18 is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous wound. If I go forth into the field, then
 behold the slain with the sword ! and if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick
 with famine ! for both the prophet and the priest go about in the land and have no knowl-
 edge.
- 19 Hast thou utterly rejected Judah ? hath thy soul loathed Zion ? why hast thou smitten us,
 and there is no healing for us ? We looked for peace, but no good came ; and for a time of
 20 healing, and behold dismay ! We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedness, and the iniquity
 21 of our fathers : for we have sinned against thee. Do not abhor *us*, for thy name's sake ; do
 22 not disgrace the throne of thy glory : remember, break not thy covenant with us. Are there
 any among the vanities of the heathen that can cause rain ? or can the heavens give showers ?
 art thou not he, O LORD our God ? therefore we will wait upon thee ; for thou hast made all
 these things.
- 15 : 1** Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my
 mind could not be toward this people : cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.
- 2 And it shall come to pass, when they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth ? then thou
 shalt tell them, Thus saith the LORD : Such as are for death, to death ; and such as are for the
 sword, to the sword ; and such as are for the famine, to the famine ; and such as are for cap-
 3 tivity, to captivity. And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the LORD : the sword to
 slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour
 4 and to destroy. And I will cause them to be tossed to and fro among all the kingdoms of the

- earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem. For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall turn aside to ask of thy welfare? Thou hast rejected me, saith the LORD, thou art gone backward: therefore have I stretched out my hand against thee, and destroyed thee; I am weary with repenting. And I have fanned them with a fan in the gates of the land; I have bereaved them of children, I have destroyed my people; they have not returned from their ways. Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the seas: I have brought upon them against the mother of the young men a spoiler at noonday: I have caused anguish and terrors to fall upon her suddenly. She that hath borne seven languisheth; she hath given up the ghost; her sun is gone down while it was yet day; she hath been ashamed and confounded: and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, saith the LORD.
- Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have not lent on usury, neither have men lent to me on usury: yet every one of them doth curse me. The LORD said, Verily I will strengthen thee for good; verily I will cause the enemy to make supplication unto thee in the time of evil and in the time of affliction.
- Can one break iron, even iron from the north, and brass? Thy substance and thy treasures will I give for a spoil without price, and that for all thy sins, even in all thy borders. And I will make them to pass with thine enemies into a land which thou knowest not: for a fire is kindled in mine anger, which shall burn upon you.
- O LORD, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and avenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy longsuffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered reproach. Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts. I sat not in the assembly of them that make merry, nor rejoiced: I sat alone because of thy hand; for thou hast filled me with indignation. Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou indeed be unto me as a deceitful brook, as waters that fail?
- Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, that thou mayest stand before me; and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: they shall return unto thee, but thou shalt not return unto them. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall; and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD.
- And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.

Chaps. 14, 15. These chapters belong to one discourse. No date appears, nor does there seem to be anything in the discourse itself to fix its date precisely. It was occasioned by a fearful drought. This fact gives tone to the whole. It was also a time of war and famine (verse 18), and the people were just on the eve of captivity. But to which of the several seasons of captivity this refers, is not clear. There were three principal seasons—viz., in the fourth year of Jehoiakim; at the close of the short reign of Jehoiachin; and at the close of the reign of Zedekiah. This chapter opens with a graphic description of fearful drought (verses 2-6); records the prophet's interceding prayer (verses 7-9); the Lord's answer (verses 10-12); and further communications between the Lord and His prophet (verses 13-18); closing with yet another prayer in the spirit of most imploring intercession for his people (verses 19-22).

This chapter is specially interesting as an instance of interceding prayer under most depressing circumstances, even when the Lord had plainly intimated that He could neither hear nor save.

14: 1. A little attention to the subject matter of this chapter will show that it is rather the history of a great drought, embracing prayers to God and communications from Him, than throughout a message from God concerning the drought. Accordingly, the chapter does not open with the formula which usually precedes and introduces a message that is simply and only a direct revelation from God. This reads literally, "What was the word of the Lord to Jeremiah concerning the words" (or history) "of the drought." The important points of the chapter are those things that come from God in respect to this case of drought. Let it be borne in mind that drought is one of

the forms of great calamity which God had stipulated, ages before, as the penalty to be suffered by the people if they should forsake their God and go into idolatry. The standard passages are De. 11 : 16, 17; 28 : 23, 24; Lev. 26 : 19, 20. H. C.

1-6. In the southern climates of the East, rain, as a rule, falls at fixed periods of the year. Failure in the periodical showers is followed by failure of the coming harvest. If the drought be severe, and spread over a large extent of country, the outcome is scarcity, and when prolonged, famine. The people perish with hunger, and the cattle for lack of fodder. Every green thing dries up; the brooks fail; even the wells fall empty; the naked ground bakes and cracks; the glare is intolerable, and the atmosphere a furnace. The distress of man and beast is here sadly pictured. *Sir W. Muir.*

7-9. *The appeal of those who have become keenly sensitive to God's separation from them.* This is set forth by two figures. He has become as a stranger in the land, as a wayfarer pitching his tent for the night. The people profess to wonder why it is so, and yet they need not wonder. He who has been in their midst because, first of all, He has gathered them around Him as the recipients of measureless privileges, finds rivals raised on every high place and in every grove. His special commands are shut out from influence on the conduct of daily life. His messenger is scorned by rulers and conspired against by His own kinsfolk. What is all this but to become even worse than a stranger? Needless, then, was it to ask the question, "Why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land?" As well might the ebbing sea ask the rock round which it rolled at flood why it had forsaken it. Jehovah had remained the same in truth, in love and in purpose. It was the people who had failed, and flowed further and further away from Him. They talked of Him as a mere wanderer among them, whereas they were the real wanderers, wandering in heart, drifting about from one temporary satisfaction to another. Y.

7. Every word of this prayer is exceedingly appropriate; confession of sin; the fullest admission that "our iniquities testify against us;" falling back upon the name—*i.e.*, the nature of God as the only plea. H. C. — In a manner like this does every soul pray that is deeply contrite. It has boldness enough amid all its guilt to come to God's throne and to keep there, but beyond this it has sometimes no boldness at all. It leaves God to show mercy to it in His own way, and to deal with it after

His own will. It feels that it needs everything. But it feels, too, that if its heavenly Father will but look on it, will but pity it, that will be enough. He is so rich, that He can give it all it wants; and so bountiful, that if He gives it anything, He will keep back nothing which will do it good. All it desires is to be treated as His child, and then come what may, it will bless Him for it. Come frowns or smiles, come stripes or caresses, it is thankful. It is in its Father's house and its Father's hands, and that contents it. *Bradley.*

8. That God had so often been the Saviour of Israel in her past seasons of trouble inspired hope yet. The prophet begs that God will come and dwell still with His people, and not be as a stranger, one not at home, or as a traveller who stops but for a night. All this is beautifully expressive of holy desire and legitimate prayer. The pious implore God to make their heart and their people His permanent abode, and never leave them. H. C.

Looking out upon the woful evils which ravage earth—physical, intellectual, moral—diseases, superstitions, sins—one can scarce forbear to cry: Are the hands to which all power in heaven and on earth is committed still bound? and, in the language of Jeremiah, to question "the hope of Israel, the savior thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save?" But ever cometh the answer, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." And "we trust that, somehow, good will be the final goal of ill." There is that in the Christian's heart that forbids his thinking otherwise. By the breath of God frost is given, and the seal of death is set on life. Days and nights come and go, and snows make desolate the face of nature. But after winter is spring; and after death, resurrection; and after the hiding of *His* face, glory; and behind "the hiding of His power," omnipotence. We rest in the firm conviction that He who abides the same continually, and is Love, will evolve harmony out of all the discords of earth. And with the solution of the various vexed and vexing questions that naturally arise in our minds in connection with the existence and continuance of evil, the solution that He will give, we shall be satisfied. *N. W. Wells.*

9. Is not the arm of Jehovah equal to any demand upon it? strong to save in every emergency? I will not (says the prophet) think of

God as far away. Let me rather think of Him as still among us, for His name is called upon this people; and let me pray that He will never leave us. Such is his prayer. H. C.

The sinful nation confesses that in itself there is no hope, but as that conviction is arrived at, another asserts itself—viz., that God is the Hope of Israel, and that in His name or character there is the promise and potency of restoration. It is in spiritual transitions like these that the soul is lost and found again. Temptation is anticipated and overcome, sin is cast away and God is throned in the heart. It is better to make such honest discovery of ourselves to God, even in our weakness and lack of faith, than that we should carry these into the conduct of life. It is in these transitions of despair and hope reaching to and resting in restored faith and settled purpose of righteousness, that the overcoming of the world is already accomplished. M.

10-16. The dispute between God and His prophet, in this chapter, seems to be like that between the owner and the dresser of the vineyard concerning the barren fig-tree (Luke 13 : 7). The justice of the owner condemns it to be cut down, the clemency of the dresser intercedes for a reprieve; Jeremiah had been earnest with God, in prayer, to return in mercy to this people. H.

10-12. The Lord replies that the people have wholly given up their heart to sin, have loved to wander from Him; that the time of retribution has now come, and He must punish. Therefore He cannot hear the prophet's prayer, and requests Him to desist. Indeed, if the people themselves were now to pray even with fasting and sacrifice, the Lord could not hear their cry or accept their offerings.

14-16. The Lord can take no responsibility for their lies. But those very prophets shall be terribly destroyed by the very sword and famine which they declared should *not* come upon the land. And the people whom they had deceived could not be held innocent. They should have known better. They too must be cast out to lie unburied; for God will pour back upon them the fruit of their own great wickedness. H. C.

13-16. Attempts are constantly made to evolve religious truth out of the inner consciousness of the thinker. No idle dreams are more delusive, since men have not the *materials* out of which to build a theology of their own; they have not the *faculties* capable of using those materials—sin perverts the spiritual vision, prejudice and self-interest distort views of

truth. False teaching in religion will be punished by fatal results. It ought to be clear to everybody that the first question concerning any teaching is whether it is true. Yet this question is often ignored. The prophet is eloquent; the doctrine is pleasing; the prediction is inviting. But what of all that if it is false? Then the false prophet will suffer by the fulfillment in himself of the prophecy he denied, and the people by the coming of the evil day they were too ready to hear discredited. P. C.

The great peril of the day is compromise, amalgamation and suppression of truth by mutual consent. Our most dangerous foes are not the decorative and monastic ritualist, nor the loud-barking atheist or sceptic; but the plausible, courteous, affiliating, "dearly-beloved brethren," who would knit all the so-called churches in one patchwork quilt, which might cover them in a soft and downy bed of spiritual sleep, leaving them to dream of security and charity, while the noxious errors which prevail among them are eating out the vitals of true godliness, spiritual experience and sound doctrine. *Dean of Carlisle.*

17-22. It is plain by the prayers we find in these verses that the prophet did not understand it (verse 11) as a prohibition, but only as a discouragement, like that (1 John 5 : 16), "I do not say he shall pray for that." H.—The next chapter will show us that the Lord was firmly fixed in His purpose to hear no prayer for His sinning people. Yet it does not appear that He frowned on His weeping prophet for this imploring supplication in their behalf. Jeremiah did not take issue with God against His justice, but he did exceedingly desire of the Lord pardoning mercy for the guilty people. The Lord had therefore only to assure him that his request could not be granted.

Chap. 15. The subject continues from the previous chapter, the Lord reaffirming His purpose not to hear prayer for the people, but to go on to execute His threatening of sore judgments. Hence, we have the severity and certainty of these judgments discussed (verses 1-9); then mostly the mental trials, fears, prayers and anguish of the prophet, with the Lord's reply to him in verses 10-21. H. C.

To the supplication at the close of the preceding chapter God replies by declaring that not even the intercession of His favored servants, Moses and Samuel, should divert Him from executing His purpose of vengeance against Judah, which is denounced in terms of great severity (verses 1-9). At verse 10 Jeremiah breaks out into a passionate exclamation,

on account of the odium and persecution that was brought upon him. God reproves him for speaking slightly of the Divine aid, the benefit of which he had already experienced. The prophet deprecates the ill effects of God's displeasure, representing the cheerful readiness with which he had obeyed the Divine call, and the continual uneasiness he had felt in contemplating the melancholy subject of his commission (verses 15-18). Assurances of protection and security are renewed to him, on condition of obedience and fidelity on his part (verse 19 to the end). *Blayney.*

1. *Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me.* Moses obtained pardon for the people after their sin of making the golden calf (Ex. 32 : 34), and again after their despising the promised land (Num. 14 : 20); Samuel's intercession prevailed for their deliverance out of the hands of the Philistines (1 Sam. 7 : 9); and these two persons are mentioned together, as remarkably prevalent by their prayers (Ps. 99 : 6, 8). But here God saith, that if these very persons were alive, and in that near attendance to Him which they formerly enjoyed (for that is the import of the phrase "to stand before Him"—see verse 19; 18 : 20), yet even their prayers should not avert His judgments from His people. (Cf. Ezek. 14 : 14.) *W. Lowth.*

Imploring, fervent and, in the main, appropriate, as the prophet's intercessions for his people were, the Lord having fully purposed to punish, He could not hear prayer for the reversal of that purpose. He must, therefore, give His servant to understand that this point is settled irreversibly. Hence He says, "Even if Moses and Samuel were here pleading before Me, My mind could not incline to mercy for this people. Cast them out of My sight"—as if the people themselves stood or were represented before Him. "Let them go" from My presence and favor. The reader who is familiar with the Scripture history of Moses and of Samuel will readily see why they are named in this connection as striking examples of prevailing, intercessory prayer. H. C.—Moses and Samuel were two as great favorites of Heaven as ever were the blessings of this earth, and were particularly famed for the success of their mediation between God and His offending people; many a time they had been destroyed if Moses had not stood before Him in the breach; and to Samuel's prayers they owed their lives (1 Sam. 12 : 19); yet even their intercessions should not prevail. H.

The fact that such intercession is declared in this case to be vain implies that, under other

conditions, it might be effectual. Moses and Samuel often stood before the Lord as mediators on behalf of the people whom they represented. Their power with God lay in the elevation of their character and the intimacy of their fellowship with Him. Every age has borne witness to the reality and efficacy of this power. "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" on behalf of his fellow-men. Who can tell how much it is owing to such intercession that a guilty world has been saved from hopeless abandonment?

There are times when no human intervention is of any avail. Even the pleading of Moses and Samuel could not have averted the threatened judgments. "My mind could not be toward this people." Why? Simply because of the obstinacy of their unbelief and irreligion. It is not that God is not merciful and gracious and ready to forgive, or that the pleadings of good and holy men have no power with Him. It is that the inveterate obduracy of men nullifies all the persuasive influence alike of Divine and human love. God's mind cannot be toward those who with obstinate impenitence refuse His grace. There is a limit beyond which even Divine patience cannot go. W.

4. I will cause them to be tossed to and fro among all the kingdoms of the earth. Never was there a prophecy more literally fulfilled; and it is still a standing monument of Divine truth. The Jews are scattered through every nation, and yet *are not a nation*; nor do they form even a colony on any part of the face of the earth. A. C.

"For lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth" (Amos 9 : 9). These are merely examples of many predictions which might be quoted; they have the clearness of history, and they have now the emphasis of a fulfilment which is mysterious in its antecedent process, but clear as noonday in its results. By the laws of amalgamation or extinction, we cannot account for the changes which appear in the smaller as well as vaster nations of the world; we can trace the causes by which Hungary and Poland have been prostrated, and by which Russia is still rising and extending in her colossal strength; we can see in the ruin of France, in the triumph of Prussia and the gradual collapse of the Turkish Empire various forces at work which have often reappeared in history; we can trace in the slow amalgamation of races in America and in the rapid dis-

appearance of Indian tribes laws definite almost as those which regulate the planetary system ; we have a sound philosophy of history, whose great aim is not the mere aggregate of many facts, but the exposition of their causes, and we are satisfied with the conclusions which have been reached ; but in the Israelites we have a people which baffle historical adjustment, and whose characteristics are not reducible within any commonly recognized classification. They remain a marvellous isolation. In Britain, the distinctions of Norman and Celt and Saxon are fast disappearing ; but the Jews are everywhere "scattered," and yet everywhere retain not only their physical features, but their intellectual, moral and religious conformation. Apart from the Bible, unaided reason has failed to solve the problem of a people scattered and down-trodden by the nations for nearly two thousand years, yet universally preserved.

What a terrible past has been theirs ! What a mysterious present ! Adrian made it death to the Jew to set his foot amid the ruins of Jerusalem ; Justinian abolished the synagogues ; Mahomet sought the destruction of every Jew ; the Church of Rome has done her best for their extirpation, and has failed. "The Jews" were everywhere the objects of popular insult, of almost intolerable oppression, and frequently of a general massacre. No mode of cruelty was deemed unjustifiable. Again and again were they banished from France ; they were driven from Spain ; England, during the Crusades, gathered her forces to destroy them ; the barons, to win popular favor during their struggle with Henry III., slaughtered seven hundred of them, and plundered their houses ; Edward I. seized all their property, and drove them in misery from the kingdom, and four hundred dreary years elapsed ere they ventured to return. There is no history which is not darkened by their wrongs, and there is none unstained by their blood. The Jew is, at this moment, a wanderer in every land, with a home in none. In no country is he unknown, from Norway to Japan, from Spain to Southern Africa ; and no social grade in the East or the West is without his presence. Yet from obscurity and apparent helplessness, in our great cities they rise through every social stage, until they sit honored amid the proud-est. In London, Paris, Vienna and Berlin they are the money-holders of Europe, deciding the questions of peace and war, and giving impulse or restraint to the commerce of the world. Although inwrought with the whole fabric of

society, they are yet not of it ; they are truly a "peculiar people," resisting almost all those social, intellectual and moral agencies by which communities are changed. *W. Fraser.*

5. The object here is not to reflect upon the prophet for his bitter tears over the fall of his country, but rather to represent her guilt as so great that even Gentile nations and foreign cities would feel that she had richly deserved to bear her doom uncared for and unpitied.

6. Often and most kindly had the Lord called the people to Himself ; but they had only gone backward from Him the more. He had repeatedly threatened, and then relaxed His purpose to punish ; waited, borne and sometimes forgiven ; but now He is weary of repenting in this sense, and is fully purposed not to yield to any plea in their behalf, but to go on forthwith to execute His long-threatened judgments. Years had passed since Manasseh's long reign closed and he went to his grave. One more vigorous effort had been made under Josiah, sustained by such men as Habakkuk, Zephaniah and Jeremiah, to reclaim and save the nation. It had promised fairly for a season, but after Josiah's death the people relapsed with terrific rapidity. They seemed to sink suddenly to a horrible depth of depravity, for only a three months' reign intervened under Jehoahaz before Jehoiakim mounted the throne, and in his fourth year the first great deportation of captives took place. A considerable number of Jeremiah's messages from the Lord bear date within this first four years of Jehoiakim, all showing that the state of morals was appalling, and that the spirit of idolatry was deep and apparently almost universal. *H. C.*

God may be weary of repenting. We may cease to repent of our sin ; then God will cease to repent of His wrath. We may sin so deeply and so persistently that He may no longer find it possible to withhold His threatened punishment. God is long-suffering ; He waits for the return of His children. Though the recompense of evil-doing is due, it is deferred ; God spares the guilty for the sake of the intercession of the righteous. But this cannot be forever. We may sin away the grace of God. Though God's mercy endureth forever the enjoyment of it by the impenitent cannot be perpetual. Eternal mercy may have to give place to eternal justice. *Adeney.*

10-14. Jeremiah is now retired into his closet ; what passed between him and his God there we have an account of in these and the following verses, which he published after-

ward, to affect the people with the weight and importance of his messages to them. H.

10. The connecting link of suggestive thought between the doom of his people—which is the prophet's theme in verses 1-9—and his own personal case, which is mostly the subject onward to the close of the chapter, seems to lie in the prominence given to the *mothers* of Jerusalem in the former portion, suggesting to the prophet the case of his own mother and of himself. The *heart* of the prophet has not come up to view since we closed chap. 14 till now. We may recollect that we left him there imploring mercy for his people, his very soul gushing forth in tenderest pity over their calamity. In this chapter the Lord absolutely shuts off his prayer, and then proceeds to give a very touching picture of the miseries that are to fall on young and old, on fathers and especially mothers in the general slaughter. Is it strange that the prophet's mind should revert to himself and to his own lot, as one of almost insupportable trial and anguish? If his prayer might avail to save his people, he could bear any amount of persecution, hate, obloquy and peril of life. But to be shut off from prayer on the side toward God, and from all sympathy on the side toward men; to receive no messages from the Lord but those of doom and vengeance, and no response from the people but curses; to be thrown into some doubt whether his overflowing sympathies and his general work as a prophet were accepted before God, and to have such terrible assurance that it was in no sense well received by his fellow-countrymen—all these circumstances constitute a crucible of sevenfold heat to try his temper and to torture his soul. Let us aim to appreciate his circumstances as we proceed to note his words and study his spirit. His expressions here are by no means so extreme as those of Job (chap. 3) in that hour when, faltering under his almost crushing burden of woe, he cursed his birthday and all its surroundings, because they let him live through that birth-scene in which he so wished that he had died. Jeremiah's words legitimately mean only this: Alas for me that I was born to be a man of strife and conflict to the whole earth! to live only to be a mark to be shot at; a man to be hated and cursed on every side! What have I done that should doom me to such odium? "I have neither lent to others on usury, nor have they so lent to me, yet they all curse me." H. C.

The proper way of regarding the words is to take them as vividly indicating a position

which no words could sufficiently describe. Jeremiah sometimes felt himself so hated and so isolated that there seemed but one way of accounting for his experience, and that was that he had been born to it. We know, indeed, that the truth was far otherwise. (See chap. 1:5.) There we see how Jehovah Himself reckoned Jeremiah to have come into this earthly existence not for suffering, but for a career of noble and useful action, which, rightly considered, was a high privilege. But a man who is constantly suffering from the sin of his fellow-men in all its shapes and all its degrees cannot be always looking at the bright side and speaking in harmony with such a view. Y.

12-14. It will be all in vain for the Jews, weak as they are when their God is against them, to break the power of their Chaldean invaders from the north. The double allusion to the north is forcible, the north being at once the quarter whence the hardest iron came, and the quarter whence the invincible Chaldeans came. The previous verse had intimated a time of sore calamity upon the Jews; this intimates the quarter whence it would come and its resistless power.

15. This language is abrupt and broken, in the tone of strong feeling. The prophet's natural love of life and indignation against his persecutors demand and obtain utterance. The middle clause, "Take me not away in Thy long suffering," seems to mean, Let not Thy long-suffering toward my enemies prove my ruin. Do not bear with them till they have taken my life. H. C.

O Lord, Thou knowest. It is a matter of comfort to us that whatever ails us we have a God to go to, before whom we may spread our case and to whose omniscience we may appeal, as the prophet here, "O Lord, Thou knowest; Thou knowest my sincerity, which men are resolved they will not acknowledge; Thou knowest my distress, which men disdain to take notice of." H.

16. He means to say that as soon as he heard the words of the Lord given him to be published, he devoured them greedily—took them to his mind and heart as a hungry man seizes and eats food. This same figure reappears in Ezek. 2:8; 3:1, and in Rev. 10:9, 10. The prophet loved the words of God, and performed his prophetic work with a dutiful and warmly pious heart. Recognizing himself as bearing the name of the Lord and as devoted to his work, he made it his business and gave his whole heart to it. This is truly a noble record

if true, and his history gives rich evidence of its truth. H. C.

There is intimated here : 1. *The vital relation truth bears to the divinely enlightened soul.* "I did eat it." No physical image could be more suggestive of the intimacy of this spiritual relationship. It indicates : *The soul's preparation to welcome the truth.* There is a divinely awakened appetite. *The active participation of the powers of the soul in the process.* It is more than a mere passive reception. *The assimilation of the truth into the very being of the man.* As food is transformed into the living fibre of the body, so that truth becomes a part of the very substance of his spiritual nature, the stay of his strength, the inspiration of his life. The word is translated into the form of holy character and godlike deed. 2. *The gladdening effect of discovered truth.* "Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." There can be no purer, nobler joy than that which springs from conscious communion with the mind of God. His Word admits us to the realities of a world undarkened by the shadows and undisturbed by the storms that trouble this. P. C.

They became to him the joy and rejoicing of his inward life. All words of God, apprehended in their real meaning, give strength, peace, satisfaction, harmony in the nobler parts of human nature. It was because these words were readily accepted and fully received that they became a joy and rejoicing to the heart, and then in the strength, fortitude, zeal, thus communicated, the prophet went forth to his arduous work. Here surely is the secret of his steadfastness. God had put His words in His servant's mouth (chap. 1 : 9) ; but that was all He could do. It was for the prophet himself so to treat the words that he should give them with all the added force of his own sanctified personality. Y.

The words of God are not so hidden that they cannot be discovered by the earnest and prayerful seeker after truth. He that seeks *shall* find (Matt. 7 : 8). Many honest, earnest men pass through a season of doubt, but few such remain hopeless sceptics all their lives. Of those who never find the light probably some are suffering from some moral or intellectual perversity which distorts their vision, and others are not content to trust to the measure of light that has been given to them, and remain restless and questioning because they desire satisfaction in a direction wherein it cannot yet be afforded. But so long as all such men do not convert doubt into settled unbelief,

and are not satisfied with doubt, we may be assured that ultimately the Father of lights will dispel the darkness that now troubles their souls.

The words of God are food for the soul. Christ, the "Word made flesh," is the "Bread of life." Truth is intended to feed our starving souls. The object of revelation is practical. The result of rightly using revelation is seen in an increase of spiritual vitality, in refreshment, heightened energy and growth in the inner life. If the words of God have not attained this end, they have failed of their object. They are food because they are not empty breath, but the vehicles of vital truths—of spirit and life (John 6 : 63). God is in His own words. They are inspired words. With the spoken words we receive the life-giving Spirit.

The words of God must be eaten to profit us. It is not enough that they are spoken, heard, understood, believed, remembered, admired ; they must be eaten. We must *apply* them to ourselves. The starving man gains nothing by looking at food through a shop-window. The external, intellectual study of truth is profitless to the soul. We must hear the voice of God speaking directly to us and in regard to our immediate conduct. We must *meditate* over the words of God. Truth must be analyzed, ideas separated and compared, "inwardly digested," hidden in the soul and quietly thought over. Our common habit is to treat it too superficially and hastily. We must *abstract the vital ideas* from the dry husk of words. Words are not profitable so long as they are regarded from the outside as mere language. We must break the shell and get at the kernel, casting aside the flesh that profiteth nothing and assimilating the spirit that quickeneth.

The words of God bring joy when they are found and eaten. To some they appear to be dull sayings, to some stern utterances of law, to some harsh messages of judgment. This is because they are not properly applied. They must first be truly found and eaten—applied, meditated on, spiritually assimilated. Then they lead to joy, for : 1. All truth is essentially noble, beautiful and glorious. 2. Even the darker truth is wholesome as a warning, like nauseous medicine that cures pain and restores the serenity of health. 3. The highest truth is a revelation of the love of God—a Gospel of good-will to men. *Adeney.*

Sanctification is the object of the entire volume. He who reads the Bible without experiencing in his heart, or evincing in his life, any

sanctifying influence; he whose affections it never stirs, whose understanding it never enlightens, whose imagination it never exalts, whose will it never directs, whose conscience it never reaches, may be quite sure that, from whatever cause, he does not read aright. E. M. G.—The life is leavened by that which supports and nourishes it. The indwelling Word is a consecrating influence and withdraws men from the pursuits and fellowship of the world. In this way the saint becomes identified with his Lord; a child of grace; a worker in the same great cause; a subject of like opposition, and an heir of the same kingdom. By producing the character of holiness they inscribe the Divine Name upon the heart, and link the life and destiny of the saint with the cause of God. M.

It is a perfectly legitimate position to say, We hold a ground of certitude, from which none of this strife of tongues is able to dislodge us. We have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is the Christ. The Scriptures which we have received, not without knowledge of the grounds on which controversialists defend them, have proved themselves to us by their own witness. The light is its own proof. We have the experience of Christ and His law. He has saved our souls; He has changed our lives. We know whom we have believed; and we are neither irrational nor obstinate when we avow that we will not pretend to suspend these convictions on the issue of any debate. All the opposition will be broken into spray against that rock bulwark: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and they are the joy and rejoicing of my heart." A. M.

17. The Lord had given him such views of the case as between Himself and this wicked people, that his heart, like God's, was burning with indignation against their sin. It seemed to him more than he could bear to think of such an abuse of the great and blessed God, and of such outrageous rebellion against Him. Why should not his soul be filled and fired with holy indignation?

18. This tone of complaint is strong—must we not say *too* strong, especially the implication in the last clause that God had not been altogether truthful and reliable. Was not this the prophet's human infirmity—nature in the ascendant over grace? It slightly softens the severity of the language to translate as we may, not "*as a failing brook, even as waters that fail.*"

19. The passage is exceedingly rich in its instruction to ministers of the Gospel. How should they stand by and with the Lord their

God in unfaltering allegiance, with the firmest adherence to His truth and obedience to His behests! How should they be careful to expel all that is vile from their temper and character, and cultivate all the precious qualities that grace has implanted and would fain develop into vigorous and all-pervading vitality! H. C.

—Faithful ministers are God's mouth to us; they are so to look upon themselves, and to speak God's mind, and as becomes the oracles of God; and we are so to look upon them, and to hear God speaking to us by them. Observe, if thou keep close to thine instructions, thou shalt be as My mouth, not otherwise; so far and no further God will stand by ministers, as they go by the written word, "Thou shalt be as My mouth, what thou sayest shall be made good, as if I Myself had said it." H.

It is by the gracious words of Divine mercy that the hearts of men are to be subdued; these must always be the prime means of affecting and vanquishing the impenitent. The human mind is framed to be influenced far more by hope and tenderness than by terror and rebuke. This great truth may be assumed as one that is fully established and universally confessed. But the Christian ministry includes also an office of commination; and if the messengers of Heaven, when they go forth among outcasts and strangers, who, in utter ignorance of God, have gone far astray from virtue, are to speak much more of mercy than of wrath; it is also true that, when they stand up among those who, being well informed in matters of religion, use the grace of the Gospel to palliate their vices, it is especially the message of wrath, which they are called upon to proclaim. The abusers of the Gospel are not to be treated *as men theologically wrong*; but in the ostensible and common character of evil doers and open contemners of the awful authority of Heaven. I. Taylor.

20, 21. The Lord could say to him as to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." So here in Old Testament phrase indeed, but in the very sense of our blessed Lord to Paul, Jehovah promises to make His prophet "a fortified brazen wall" which they might assail but could not overthrow, nor even breach. (See 1:18, 19, where the same promise was given him in the outset of his prophetic life.) Will it not always be true that the Lord stands by those who stand by Him; will make their strength as their day, and apportion grace to the measure of human infirmity and weakness? Only let His servants put their trust in Him, so shall their souls never be put to shame. H. C.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTER XVI.

16:1, 2 THE word of the LORD came also unto me, saying, Thou shalt not take thee a
 3 wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place. For thus saith the LORD con-
 cerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning
 their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land :
 4 They shall die of grievous deaths ; they shall not be lamented, neither shall they be buried ;
 they shall be as dung upon the face of the ground : and they shall be consumed by the
 sword, and by famine ; and their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the
 5 beasts of the earth. For thus saith the LORD, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither
 go to lament, neither bemoan them : for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith
 6 the LORD, even lovingkindness and tender mercies. Both great and small shall die in this
 land : they shall not be buried, neither shall men lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor
 7 make themselves bald for them : neither shall men break *bread* for them in mourning, to
 comfort them for the dead ; neither shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for
 8 their father or for their mother. And thou shalt not go into the house of feasting to sit with
 9 them, to eat and to drink. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel : Behold, I
 will cause to cease out of this place, before your eyes and in your days, the voice of mirth
 10 and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. And it
 shall come to pass, when thou shalt shew this people all these words, and they shall say
 unto thee, Wherefore hath the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us ? or what is
 11 our iniquity ? or what is our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God ? then
 shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the LORD, and have
 walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have for-
 12 saken me, and have not kept my law ; and ye have done evil more than your fathers ; for,
 behold, ye walk every one after the stubbornness of his evil heart, so that ye hearken not
 13 unto me : therefore will I cast you forth out of this land into the land that ye have not known,
 neither ye nor your fathers ; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night ; for I will
 shew you no favour.

14 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, As the LORD
 15 liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt ; but, as the LORD
 liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the
 countries whither he had driven them : and I will bring them again into their land that I
 16 gave unto their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall
 fish them ; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every
 17 mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks. For mine eyes are upon
 all their ways : they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity concealed from mine
 18 eyes. And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double ; because they have
 polluted my land with the carcases of their detestable things, and have filled mine inheri-
 19 tance with their abominations. O LORD, my strength, and my strong hold, and my refuge in
 the day of affliction, unto thee shall the nations come from the ends of the earth, and shall
 say, Our fathers have inherited nought but lies, *even* vanity and things wherein there is no
 20, 21 profit. Shall a man make unto himself gods, which yet are no gods ? Therefore, behold,
 I will cause them to know, this once will I cause them to know mine hand and my might ;
 and they shall know that my name is Jehovah.

Chap. 16. The special message commenc-
 ing here embraces the entire sixteenth chapter
 and the first eighteen verses of chap. 17. The
 date is not given, but the subject-matter favors
 its date in the third or fourth year of Jehoia-
 kim, about the time when he rebelled against
 Nebuchadnezzar, and " the Lord brought upon

the land bands of Chaldeans, Syrians," etc.,
 resulting in the first deportation of captives to
 Babylon. (See 2 K. 24 : 1, 2.) These calami-
 ties were obviously just at hand—the first in-
 stalment of that series of judgments which
 closed with the final and utter devastation and
 depopulation of the country. H. C.

1-9. The prophet is here for a sign to the people; they would not regard what he said, let it be tried whether they will regard what he does. In general, he must conduct himself so in everything as became one that expected to see his country in ruins very shortly. This he foretold, but few regarded the prediction; therefore he is to show that he is himself fully satisfied in the truth of it. Others go on in their usual course, but he, in the prospect of these sad times, is forbidden, and therefore forbears marriage, mourning for the dead and mirth. H.—It is made plain upon the surface of this command that the house of mourning and the house of feasting are not forbidden in themselves. The man on whom the injunction is laid is a special man, and he is spoken to in special circumstances. All others may cross the threshold of such houses; the prophet alone must remain outside. This peculiar conduct was meant to emphasize his predictions. Every time there is a funeral or a marriage feast, the terrible judgments shortly coming on the land are once more set forth. The worst sorrows of the present are but as a child's shallow grief compared with the universal and dreadful experiences that are yet to come; and in the joys of the present it would be unseemly for the man to share whose breast is filled with the sense of how soon these joys must pass away. A man who had to live as Jeremiah lived, in such an age, with such a message, seeing visions of so much woe, how could he receive pleasure from any festive gathering or bring pleasure to it? The more he advances in his mission as prophet the more he has to walk alone. Y.

2. The prophet, remaining unmarried and without family by a special command of the Lord, would be a standing testimony to the people of the judgments impending over the land. It was also a kindness to him, exempting him from some cares that might otherwise have greatly augmented the difficulties of his very difficult work. H. C.

5. Have taken away loving-kindness and tender mercies. Nothing sweeter than mercy when it is improved; nothing fiercer when it is abused; nothing colder than lead when it is taken out of the mine; nothing more scalding than lead when it is heated; nothing blunter than iron; nothing sharper when it is whetted. "The mercy of the Lord is upon them that fear Him." Mercy is not for them that sin and fear not, but for them that fear and sin not. God's mercy is a holy mercy; where it pardons it heals. *Watson.*

9. Essentially the same things are said (chap. 7:34). That this should occur before their eyes and in their days indicates it to be very near at hand.

10-13. Note the care taken to make the people inquire after the *causes* of these sore calamities. For the desired moral results this was of the utmost consequence. The Lord would have them understand that these judgments came because of their great sins, and very particularly because of their sins in the worship of idol gods, and in violation of His law generally. These phrases have occurred before. H. C.

10. The picture drawn by Jeremiah is vague and yet terribly suggestive. It is so foreign to the experience and expectation of his hearers that they look upon it with incredulity and astonishment. Instead of evoking from them expressions of repentance and fear concerning the way in which they are walking, it provokes questions that exhibit the callous indifference and self-deception of hardened hearts. They cannot conceive of such a fate awaiting them. What have they done? Is it just that their conduct should be so dealt with? If any offence had been committed, surely it was out of all proportion to such a judgment, and so on. Is not this the attitude of the sinner to-day? The more awful the future predicted for him the more secure he feels in himself now. He fails to trace the definite line of connection between the germ and the fruit of his sin. It is a part of his infatuation to misapprehend the law of the Divine reward and punishment, and even the real outlines and proportions of the Divine character. M.

14-21. There is a mixture of mercy and judgment in these verses, and it is hard to know to which to apply some of the passages here, they are so interwoven; and some seem to look as far forward as the times of the Gospel. H.

14. God here gives the people notice of a future restoration, on purpose to guard them during their exile from falling into idolatry through despair, by letting them see they had still a prospect of recovering God's wonted favor and protection. *Blayney.*—These words of promise are interposed here for the comfort of all pious hearts, to show that these judgments would not exterminate the nation utterly, for yet a remnant should survive and should still enjoy the rich mercies of the God of their fathers. The deliverance from this new captivity would so greatly eclipse the exodus from Egypt as quite to supersede it in the thought and speech of the people. The former would cease to be named as *the* one great deliverance;

the latter would take its place. In form the same promises occur again (23 : 7, 8). H. C.

Here again we come upon the evangelical element in Jeremiah's prophecies ; and again we have to notice that, when this element does appear, it makes up for its infrequency by the brilliance and emphasis of the prediction. The prophet has just been compelled to speak of domestic suffering, national exile and the withdrawal for a season of Divine favor. These necessary judgments must be magnified and stated in all their severity ; not one of them can be omitted ; the cup poured out by Jehovah must be drunk to its last drop. But when all these experiences are over, terrible and yet full of discipline, a glorious future remains. The manner of the prophecy is full of encouragement, and not least in this, that there is such a sudden turning from the deepest darkness to the brightness of noon. Y.

15. God will bring back His banished ones, and make good the promise : " I will bring them again into the land that I gave unto their fathers." Till then, a church without a temple, a people without a country, a race without a home, a nation meted out and trodden down, they shall be a proverb and a by-word and a perpetual hissing.

Strange fortunes these ! yet, far from proving God's hand to be shortened, they prove the very reverse. With the regularity of a law of nature, one of two fates has befallen all other conquered nations. Like the Indians of America, who have fallen before the white man as their forests before his axe, they have been extirpated ; or the conquered have intermarried with their conquerors to breed a race like ours, in whose veins flows the mingled tide of Roman, Celtic, Saxon and Scandinavian blood. The fate of the Jews how different and how singular ! They have been oppressed, persecuted, trodden under foot ; and, like the grass which grows thickest when trodden on, they have thriven under oppression—bearing a charmed life—the true sons of their fathers in the land of Egypt ; of whom it was said, the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew.

The Jews are everywhere, inhabiting every country, yet belonging to none ; mixed with every people, but combining with none. By the thrones of kings, in the senate-house of nations, in the mart of business, in the ranks of armies, everywhere the same, the Jew preserves his nationality, his faith, his haughty pride, his blood so pure that, whether you encounter him in the streets of London, or Paris, or Rome,

or Petersburg, or Pekin, you can tell at once by his features that he is a son of Abraham. They exist among others as no other race ever did—like oil in water ; and like oil, too, where their talents and ambition have free play, they usually rise to the top. They are not a holy nation, nor are they zealous of good works ; yet they are a peculiar people—a standing moral miracle ; their history a mystery. Living, multiplying, flourishing amid circumstances that, by all the common laws of providence, should have been fatal to their existence, they illustrate the unchanging and unchangeable purpose and power of God. *Guthrie.*

16. Enemies and oppressors are elsewhere represented under the metaphors of " fishers " and " hunters " (see Gen. 10 : 9 ; Amos 4 : 2 ; Hab. 1 : 14, 15), because they use all the methods of open force and secret wiles, frequently compared to nets, in order to make men their prey. (See Ezek. 12 : 13 ; Hos. 5 : 1.) These two similitudes imply that the Chaldeans shall make an entire conquest and booty of the whole land, of its inhabitants and their riches ; and what shall escape one party shall fall into the hands of another. *W. Louth.*

16-21. The striking imagery of these verses teaches us that there shall be no hiding-place, whether by sea or land, where God will not find those whom His vengeance pursues. The sinner may be sure that his sin will find him out. Men doubt this. Long impunity has made them bold. Such findings of them out as have taken place, in defilement of conscience, hardening of the heart, loss of peace with God, etc., they do not care for. They only care for public exposure and punishment. They see others go on in sin unpunished. But the declaration of God on this matter is nevertheless true. The Scriptures affirm it (compare all those which teach the omniscience and omnipresence of God). Conscience attests it. There is nothing in sin to show wherefore it should not be. The revelation of the future life distinctly provides for it. And even now it is continually being proved true. A man's sin finds him out in many ways—in body, mind, estate, reputation, etc. And in one or more of these sin does ever find a man out, even now. The apparent exceptions are accounted for on the ground of God's long suffering to the sinful ; God's purpose to test and exercise the faith of His own people.

A deep and abiding conviction of this to be greatly desired. And such conviction may be had. It is the sacred and salutary power of prayer thus to make God real to us. In prayer

we look to Him and we see Him looking upon us; we speak to Him and He speaks to us; by aid of it we walk with Him and He walks with us. He who thus lives in daily fellowship with God can never be without the conviction spoken of. C.

19, 20. Addressing God as his own strength and refuge, he expresses his confident assurance that Gentile nations, taught by His dealings with Israel, will come to the true God, acknowledging that the idol gods of their fathers were lies and vanity, and astonished that a man should think to *make* his own gods which yet could be no gods at all. This must have been a most delightful anticipation to the tried and tender heart of this prophet. H. C.

They shall be brought to acknowledge that their God only is God indeed, for He is a God in need; my Strength to support and comfort me; my Fortress to protect and shelter me, and my Refuge to whom I may flee in the day of affliction. Need drives many to God who had set themselves at a distance from Him. Those that slighted Him in the day of their prosperity will be glad to flee to Him in the day of their affliction. H.

It was One who knew that said, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Happy are they only who have sorrow sweetened by the Divine promise. They have storms, but they have both an anchor and a haven. Goodness cannot be manifested more clearly than in a sanctifying process, however severe. There are thoughts in the darkened chamber of sorrow which visit us nowhere else—important, salutary thoughts, to instruct, confirm, purify, arm and comfort; thoughts of our sin, our selfishness, our idolatry, our worldliness, our unbelief; thoughts of the abiding joy laid up in heaven, where sickness, alarm, despair and sin never come. And I speak the mind of all sanctified affliction, when I add, that among them all, no thought is more constant than that of God's goodness as an eternal refuge. J. W. A.

We are in a state of trial because we are men, because we are limited in the capacities of our understanding and in the power of our endurance; but we are subject to so painful a necessity as this pre-eminently because we are sinners, and because a heroic treatment is needed if we are to secure salvation from sin. We are full of pride, and the root of Pharisaism needs to be cut by the sharp edge of God's truth.

The malady of the heart needs to be exposed; and sometimes that requires severe, stern, painful, persistent discipline. Oh, the obstinacy of the human soul! And then, if we remember that covetousness is idolatry, who of us is there that has not been guilty of idolatry! The riches of this world, the pleasures of this life, the applauses of men—oh, how sweet they are, how eagerly sought for amid the mad competitions of life! And it requires a stern and bitter discipline sometimes to teach us that the things that are seen are, after all, only temporal, while the things that are unseen are the only things that are eternal. O beloved! God loves you. He knows that there is weakness in you. He knows you will rest your souls' salvation on the false foundation of your own righteousness unless He sweeps that from underneath you, and makes you feel that there is nothing but emptiness under your feet; and so comes in the serious discipline of life, to teach us our weakness and show us the weakness of our supports, that we may hasten to find refuge in His grace, and to find shelter under the shadow of His wing. *Behrends.*

21. He will give His people this experience for the sake in part of its influence on the heathen—as much as to say, Very true, the influence of these judgments on My apostate people will reach and bless the heathen, *therefore* all the more will I make My people know the power of My hand and the glorious attributes of My eternal being. H. C.

The Gentiles are represented as coming to Jehovah. They have groped their way out of darkness and disentangled themselves from superstitions, while the very people whom Jehovah had brought to Himself with so much power and patience, making their way clear and safe, would not inwardly come, even though they were outwardly brought. Their hearts were not changed with their changed circumstances. And it is a thing which cannot be too much remarked, that the Gentiles have long had an understanding, not only of the New Testament, but equally of the Old, which the children of Israel have been utterly unable to reach. And not only are these Gentiles to come; they are to come from the ends of the earth. God's drawing power is felt everywhere. Jerusalem is the centre from which light and truth in their great historical manifestations have gone out. Y.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTER XVII.

- 17:1 THE sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, *and* with the point of a diamond : it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars ; whilst their children remember their altars and their Asherim by the green trees upon the high hills. O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance and all thy treasures for a spoil, *and* thy high places, because of sin, throughout all thy borders. And thou, even of thyself, shalt discontinue from thine heritage that I gave thee ; and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not : for ye have kindled a fire in mine anger which shall burn for ever.
- Thus saith the LORD : Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh ; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out his roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat cometh, but his leaf shall be green ; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is desperately sick : who can know it ? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings. As the partridge that gathereth *young* which she hath not brought forth, so is he that getteth riches, and not by right ; in the midst of his days they shall leave him, and at his end he shall be a fool.
- A glorious throne, *set* on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary. O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed ; they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters. Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed ; save me, and I shall be saved : for thou art my praise. Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of the LORD ? let it come now. As for me, I have not hastened from being a shepherd after thee ; neither have I desired the woeful day ; thou knowest : that which came out of my lips was before thy face. Be not a terror unto me : thou art my refuge in the day of evil. Let them be ashamed that persecute me, but let not me be ashamed ; let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed : bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.
- Thus saith the LORD unto me : Go, and stand in the gate of the children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem ; and say unto them, Hear ye the word of the LORD, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates ; thus saith the LORD : Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem ; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work : but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers ; but they hearkened not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, and might not receive instruction. And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the LORD, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but to hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work therein ; then shall there enter in by the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem : and this city shall remain for ever. And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places round about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the lowland, and from the mountains, and from the South, bringing burnt offerings, and sacrifices, and oblations, and frankincense, and bringing *sacrifices* of thanksgiving, unto the house of the LORD. But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden and enter in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day ; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

Chap. 17. As indicated in remarks introductory to chap. 16, the first eighteen verses of | this chapter may be considered as a continuation of the same message. The thought turns

on the depth and strength of the national sin (verses 1, 2); the exterminating judgments that must ensue (verses 3, 4); the comparative results of trusting in man and trusting in God (verses 5-8); the treachery of the heart, the instability of riches, the scoffs of the wicked against the prophet's messages, and his consequent prayer. H. C.

In this chapter the prophet describes in the first four verses the attachment of Judah to idolatry, and foretells the fatal consequences. He contrasteth the accursed condition of him who resteth his trust on man with the blessedness of one that trusteth in God, and illustrates both by apt comparisons (verses 5-8). He sheweth that, be the human heart ever so wily, God can detect, and will finally punish its double dealing (verses 9-11). He acknowledgeth that sure salvation cometh from God, and from Him only (verses 12-14). And, complaining of those that scoffed at his predictions, he prayed for the Divine countenance and support against them (verses 15-18).

The remaining part of the chapter is taken up with a distinct prophecy relative to the strict observance of the Sabbath day, which the prophet was sent—most probably immediately after the delivery of the foregoing—to proclaim aloud, in all the gates of Jerusalem, as a matter which concerned the conduct of every individual, and the general happiness of the whole.

1. *With a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.* This is spoken metaphorically, and is meant to denote that idolatry was indelibly fixed in their affections and memory, as much as if it had been engraved with instruments capable of making the strongest and most durable impression, upon their hearts as upon a writing tablet, and upon their altars so as to be forever present before their eyes. (Cf. De. 11:18-20; Prov. 3:3; 7:3.) *Blayney.*

1, 2. The sin of Judah, and especially her sin of idolatry, is deep in her heart; as the memory (*i.e.*, love) of children do they love their altars, groves, etc. In this construction verse 2 amplifies and illustrates the thought of verse 1, by comparing Judah's love of idols to the love felt for children in parental bosoms. As parents love their children with an enduring love, that no perverseness can eradicate and no coldness or ingratitude can quench, so do this people love their idol altars and groves. H. C.

Sin leaves a record of itself. It is not an isolated act. It begets consequences, plants memories, creates guilt. The record remains even if we do not read it. God still notes it, and will some day confront us with it. Hence it is

not enough to amend our ways for the future. We need to have past transgressions blotted out if we are to be restored to peace with God. *Adeney.*

That we do not see the evil of our life proves one of two things—either that there is no evil to see or that we are spiritually blind and cannot see the evil which there is. Now, spiritual blindness has for its usual concomitant spiritual pride; and the man spiritually blind is the very last who will admit that he is so. If we are left to ourselves we shall never discover the original cause and fountain of all our troubles; something outside of ourselves must come in and lead to an altered view of the purposes and possibilities of life. Y.

3. "O my mountain, I will give thy substance in the field," etc. Nations and princes of great power and eminence are figuratively called "mountains," in regard to their strength and elevation. (See chap. 51:25; Isa. 41:15; Zech. 4:7.) Judah is therefore styled God's mountain, as having been chosen by Him, and thereby raised to a degree of elevation above all other people. *Blayney.*

5-8. *Trust: human and Divine.* The prophet here presents before us a vivid contrast between two types of human character. He does this by the use of suggestive images drawn from the realm of nature, as one accustomed to see the great lessons of man's moral life and destiny reflected in visible forms in the sandy desert and sterile places of the wilderness, and in the fertile valleys and woody banks of the flowing river. The imagery is peculiarly Oriental. We can all appreciate it in some measure, but those who have seen the scanty, stunted vegetable growths of the desert side by side with the rich foliage that clothes the moist ravines and the borders of the water-courses, can best understand the exquisite truth and fitness of the analogies. W.

5, 6. The Hebrew language, having three distinct words for *man*, has the advantage of our English in the finer shades of a passage like this: "Cursed is the man" (the *strong* man) "who trusteth in man" (frail man of the earth), "who maketh flesh" (mere weakness as opposed to spirit) "his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord"—in the sense of forsaking His service and worship, and hence of necessity ceasing to trust in God as his strength. The *heath* in the desert, according to our English version, would be a shrub which might possibly live in the desert under favorable circumstances. The picture is of one who is cut off from all earthly good, from

friends, society, helpers in trouble, everything that gives comfort to man or joy to human life. The sentiment is good for all time and for all circumstances; for every individual, everywhere and always. The moment we accept the truth of God's universal providence and take in the precious views of it given by our Divine Lord (Matt. 6:25-34), as shown in God's care for the fowls of heaven and the lilies and grass of the field, we shall see the fitness of "casting all our care upon Him because He careth for us," and because His care is infinitely more and better than our own. H. C.

The sin here condemned is trusting in man, putting that confidence in the wisdom and power, the kindness and faithfulness of men, which should be placed in those attributes of God only; making our applications to men, and raising our expectations from them as principal agents, whereas they are but instruments in the hand of Providence. It is making flesh the arm we stay upon, the arm we work with, and with which we hope to work our point; the arm under which we shelter ourselves, and on which we depend for protection. God is His people's arm (Isa. 33:2). We must not think to make any creature to be that to us which God has undertaken to be. H.

To "make flesh one's arm" is suggestive of personal reliance on merely human and earthly resources, in neglect of the spiritual and Divine. It takes the form of undue self-confidence—confidence in one's own wisdom and strength, or confidence in our fellow-creatures, who are as ignorant and weak and fallible as ourselves, or confidence in that which is outward and circumstantial—worldly riches, sensible gratifications, material guarantees. Such a trust is false and delusive. It has no sure foundation. It seeks life in the region of death. As the plant finds nothing to nourish it in the barren sand, so man can never draw the nutriment his being needs from mere human and earthly resources. W.

7, 8. In beautiful antithesis stands the case of him who trusteth in the Lord. He is blessed. He is an Oriental tree whose roots find living water on the river bank, and which has no occasion for anxiety in the year of drought. In this passage the author's mind is manifestly on that beautiful description (Ps. 1:3) which paints the blessedness of the good man. His heart always green and verdant, his life always bearing the fruits of holiness, he is a living witness to the riches of grace and to the wealth of resources for essential victory over sin which lie stored in the bosom of our

God, ever flowing out to fill the hungry, humble, trusting souls of His people. H. C.

In the first psalm the righteous man stands like a graceful tree before an ornamented gateway to an Oriental garden. "Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." In these words of Jeremiah this comparison is drawn out with still greater minuteness: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh; but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." In those Egyptian deserts on the banks of the Nile the traveller may see the very living picture that the prophet and poet may have had in his own mind. He may see trees apparently growing out of the hot, glistening, scorching sand banks, in which half their trunks are already buried, but all verdant at the top with thick, luxuriant foliage, where not even the spiky shrubs of the wilderness can grow beneath. It is because they are so deeply rooted now, where they sprang at first, in the nourishing soil of the bed of the river, and no upper external changes of sand, or heat, or drought can affect them short of a complete submerging by a deluge of the desert. Such is the delightful image of a Christian, whose trust is in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. Such is the perpetual and joyful verdure and fruitfulness of a soul that is rooted and grounded in the love of Christ. *Cheever.*

The man "who trusts in the Lord" is planted in the best soil for perfect growth. His leaves are bathed in the air that is most healthful and invigorating. The sun rises upon him and sifts its gentle beams down through all his being. He dwells in a land as different from that of the man whose heart departeth from the Lord—as different as the green valley through whose bosom flows a crystal stream is from the blazing sky and burning sand of the desert. The living water flowing in glad refreshment to the believer from Christ's love, the rich soil of the Word contributing its nourishment and the blessed light of hope lending its inspiration, the man grows to his true proportions and rises to his high and noble destiny. There in his daily life is the beauty of holiness. There the precious fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentle-

ness, goodness. There are the beneficent graces that shine out to the view. And this ever-fresh life and fruitfulness the blasting heat of adversity and of temptation cannot destroy. The refreshing waters are abundant, and through faith they carry life to the thirsty soul. In all the fiery trials that come, amid all the adverse influences that surround it, the life still shows in beauty, and the character grows in enduring strength.

One of the grand duties in the service required of the Christian here below is just to stand in the place where God has planted him and grow up in the beauty of holiness and yield the fruits of the Spirit. The Christian who mourns a lack of ability and opportunity, and who seems to himself to be doing nothing for his Lord, may see here how greatly he mistakes his calling. To live Christ, to show the power of faith and the practical working of Christian truth in himself; to show the beauty of the Christian spirit and the sweetness of its temper and the nobleness of its character—this is the chief way to glorify God and advance His kingdom in the world. To just grow up before men as a tree by living waters, flourishing in the grand proportions of a Christian manhood, this is the most effective contribution to the redemption of the world. Men seeing your good works will glorify your Father in heaven. And so let every Christian abide in faith by the living waters, drink of them continually, and lift his head forever in the sunshine of the loving-kindness of the Lord. *Interior.*

He is the strong man who trusts in Jehovah, and he is strong just as far as he does trust. Notice how the requirement of trust is expressed twice over, first by a verb and then by a noun, both of which have the same root letters. It is as if we first saw the man in the active exercise of trust, and then the habitual confidence of his nature. We see the man trusting and we also see the trusting man. "All things are possible to him that believeth." When God speaks, the trustful hearer readily acts upon the strength of God meaning what He says. The statements of the Gospel transcend human powers of discovery, and they can only be believed because God makes them—He whose regular and beneficent ways in nature prove Him to be so true. Man by faith puts himself in the hands of God, his Maker, and then he can do things far beyond what he has hitherto imagined to be practicable. Y.

Not careful in drought. We have

always or we can always get strength enough to bear the evil when it comes. We have not strength to bear the foreboding of it. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." In strict proportion to the God-appointed existing exigency will be the God-given power. But if we crowd both the sorrows of to-day, which we actually feel, and those of to-morrow which we anticipate, into the narrow room of four-and-twenty hours, there is no promise that our strength will be as that day. God gives us power to bear all the sorrows and cares of His making; but He does not bind Himself to give us power to bear those which we manufacture with perverse industry for ourselves by being "over-exquisite to cast the fashion of uncertain evils." The Lord would teach us that the exercise of that anxious care, which is the misuse of the great faculty of looking forward and picturing things to come, is contrary to nature, revelation and providence; that it weakens and distracts; that it takes the sunshine out of every landscape and flings a shadow over all good. Surely God gave us that wonderful faculty for better purposes than that we might by it torment ourselves, and suffer every evil twice over. Why should we exercise our power of imagining the future chiefly in regard to to-morrow's possible evils, when we might by its aid fill the winter of our earthly life with the glorious summer of eternity, and bring assurance of things hoped for to lighten the dark present? We cannot but look forward; but we may choose whether we shall look but a little way ahead on the low level, or beyond and above all the trifles at hand to "that one far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves." A. M.

9. The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is desperately sick: who can know it?

The plain sense of this verse is, that the heart is more deceitful than any other known thing, and is sick unto death—a case to be despaired of—so deceitful and so bad that the world may be challenged to fathom and search it all out. "Who can know it" to the bottom? There is no word in Hebrew corresponding to our English word "wicked." Hopelessly, irrecoverably deceitful so far as human relief goes, seems to be the sense of the original. There is reason for the suggestion that the prophet had the case of King Jehoiakim specially in mind here, as also in verses 6, 7. But his form of statement is general and applies to the deep and subtle depravity of the unrenewed heart in all men. H. C.

The heart calls evil good, and good evil; puts

false colors upon things, and cries peace to those to whom peace does not belong. When men say in their hearts, suffer their hearts to whisper to them, that either there is no God, or He does not see, or He will not require, or they shall have peace, though they go on; in these and a thousand similar suggestions the heart is deceitful; it cheats men into their own ruin; and this will be the aggravation of it, that they are self-deceivers, self-destroyers. Herein the heart is desperately wicked; it is deadly, it is desperate. The case is bad indeed, and in a manner past relief if the conscience, which should rectify the errors of the other faculties, is itself a mother of falsehood and a ringleader in the delusion. What will become of a man if that in him which should be the candle of the Lord give a false light—if God's deputy in the soul that is intrusted to support His interests betrays them? Such is the deceitfulness of the heart, that we may truly say, "Who can know it?" Who can describe how bad the heart is? We cannot know our own hearts, not what they will do in an hour of temptation (Hezekiah did not, Peter did not), nor what corrupt dispositions there are in them, nor in how many things they have turned aside; who can understand his errors? Much less can we know the hearts of others, or have any dependence upon them. H.

In the heart we find the true man. The outer life is but the clothing, and may be the mask of the man. From the heart spring all the actions of life. The character of the fountain determines that of the stream. The root of the evil of the heart is *self-will*. It is *rugged* above all things, proud, not compliant with God's will, wrapped up in self. The character of the evil of the heart is *desperate sickness*, for sin is a disease of the soul, though one for which we are responsible, and it results in suffering, general derangement of life, and finally death. The evil of the heart is *inscrutable* to man. "Who can know it?" This is the case, because we cannot read the hearts of our fellow-men, but only judge from external conduct, which is often deceptive; because we are blinded to our own sin by pride, prejudice and self-admiration; because there is an intricacy and subtlety about all wickedness which makes it difficult to trace it out, a shamefacedness that seeks concealment, and an essential falseness that belies its own nature; and because the disease has made so great progress, has penetrated so deeply, ramified so far, and infected every function of the soul so completely that it is beyond all measure. *Adeney.*

Notice in particular that it is by the heart that the heart is to be known. Heart knowledge is not like other kinds of knowledge; it depends on the character of him who knows. There is no *essential* contradiction between high intellectual acquirements and a hard, selfish and perhaps even, in some instances, a profligate life. Men of refined tastes and great intellectual sensibilities may be thoroughly selfish, careless about the toil and suffering of the world, so long as these plant no thorn in their pillows, infuse no bitterness into their cup. But one who would know the heart must be very sure of his own motives, otherwise he may make human nature to appear better in some respects and worse in others than it really is. The description here may, therefore, be taken as applying even more forcibly to the heart that knows than to the heart that is to be known. Here the great difficulty and danger lie. For the deceitful and corrupt heart can be known, if not by any one else, at all events by Jehovah Himself. But the deceitful and corrupt heart cannot know; it does not, in the fullest sense of the word, know anything at all. With hearts put right, what a wonderful increase of knowledge and of the profit and pleasure of knowledge will there be! But till then we are not unlike those who suffer from diseased intellects. Y.

There is a secret disposition in the heart of all to all sin; temptation doth not fall on us as a ball of fire on ice or snow, but as a spark on tinder, or lightning on a thatched roof, which presently is on a flame. Hence in Scripture, though tempted by Satan, yet the sin is charged on us, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed." Mark! 'tis Satan *tempts*, but our own lust *draws us*. The fowler lays the shrap, but the bird's own desire betrays it into the net. *Gurnall.*

When the tenderness of the soul is lost, and its first awe of God and religion broke by a bold sin, it grows venturesome, and ready to throw itself upon all sorts of outrages and enormities. It does not demur and tremble as it used to do, when anything gross and foul was proposed to it; but it closes with it readily, and steps undauntedly into that stream that is like to carry away and swallow it up forever. This growing, encroaching mischief perhaps first fastens but upon the thoughts, and they take the liberty to settle upon some unlawful base thing, like flies upon a carcass; from these it advances a step farther, and seizes the desires, which presently are carried

out with a restless eagerness after the same vile object ; and these at length meet with some friendly opportunity, by the help of which they break forth into actual commission ; which actual commission grows from one into many, and comes to be frequent and repeated, till it settles into a custom and fixes itself immovably and forever in a man's behavior. *South.*

When once a man has done a wrong thing it has an awful power of attracting him and making him hunger to do it again. Every evil that I do may, indeed, for a moment create in me a revulsion of conscience, but stronger than that revulsion of conscience it exercises a fascination over me which it is hard to resist. It is a great deal easier to find a man that has never done a wrong thing than to find a man that has only done it once. If the wall of the dyke is sound it will keep the water out, but if there is the tiniest hole in it, it will all come in. So the evil that you do asserts its power over you, it has a fierce, longing desire after you, and it gets you into its clutches. Beware of the first evils, for as sure as you are living, the first step taken will make the second seem to become necessary. The first drop will be followed by a bigger second, and the second, at a shorter interval, by a more copious third, until the drops become a shower, and shower becomes a deluge. The course of evil is ever wider and deeper, and more tumultuous. The little sins get in at the window and open the front door for the big housebreakers. One smooths the path for the other. All sin has an awful power of perpetuating and increasing itself. As the prophet says in his awful vision of the doleful creatures that make their sport in the desolate city, "None of them shall want her mate. The wild beasts of the desert shall meet with the wild beasts of the islands." Every sin tells upon character, and makes the repetition of itself more and more easy. "None is barren among them." And all sin is linked together in a slimy tangle, like a field of seaweed, so that the man once caught in its oozy fingers is almost sure to drown. A. M.

Great criminals struggle *toward* not against their crime. They buffet with *opposing* waves to gain the bloody shore, not to recede from it. This man went on knowingly, with infinite endurance, pains and perseverance to his deed of guilt. *Dickens.*

It is not that the world does not abound with manifestations of moral as well as of physical beauty. It is not that many fair and admirable impulses and principles of action are not every day witnessed by men ; that the family rela-

tion, that the larger social relations, have not their virtues respected and honored among us. This is not what the Bible asserts when it speaks of the heart of man as utterly depraved, of the world as a moral ruin. What it does assert is this—that all which is excellent in the natural man is excellent irrespectively of his God ; that he loves, hates, prefers, rejects—and often rightly too—but without any thought of God's laws of preference and rejection ; that thus all—and there is much—that is beautiful in his best impulses is beautiful only as the flower or the landscape is beautiful ; his heart as little moving through its circle of social kindness from a desire to approve itself to the God who has commanded them, as the flower expands its petals and sheds its fragrance in voluntary obedience to Him who created it—the one beauty being as much and as little *religious* as the other. If every motive must be comparatively worthless for the activities of eternity but that which connects us directly with our God ; if with the earthly framework the earthly impulses shall in death be dissipated, and the immortal spirit be left to those alone which can stand the fiery test of God's tremendous presence, then no virtue but godliness, no excellence but that which springs from God, no affection but that which tends to God, no rule of life but that which God has sanctioned and which trains for God, can ever be the virtue, or the excellence, or the affection, or the rule, which is fitted for a creature travelling hourly on through time to God's own eternity. W. A. B.

To put the question concerning the natural depravity of man to the severest test ; take the *best of the human species*, the *watchful, diligent, self-denying Christian*, and let him decide the controversy ; and that, not by inferences drawn from the practices of a thoughtless and dissolute world, but by an appeal to his *personal experience*. Go with him into his closet, ask him *his* opinion of the corruption of the heart, and he will tell you that he is deeply sensible of its power, for that he has learned it from much self-observation and long acquaintance with the workings of his own mind. He will tell you that *every* day strengthens this conviction ; yea, that *hourly* he sees fresh reason to deplore his want of simplicity in intention, his infirmity of purpose, his low views, his selfish, unworthy desires, his backwardness to set about his duty, his languor and coldness in performing it ; that he finds himself obliged continually to confess that he feels within him two opposite principles, and that *he cannot do the things that he*

would. He cries out in the language of the excellent Hooker, "The little fruit which we have in holiness, it is, God knoweth, *corrupt and unsound*; we put no confidence at all in it, we challenge nothing in the world for it, we dare not call God to reckoning as if we had Him in our debt books; *our continual suit to Him is, and must be, to bear with our infirmities, and pardon our offences!*" *Wilberforce.*

10. "I the Lord search the heart; I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings." With great beauty and force we are taught here that what man cannot search out God can. It is His prerogative to search and to know the inmost heart of man. Nothing can ever be hidden from his piercing eye. Nor does He search and know men's hearts for purposes of idle curiosity, or for the mere information itself, but for the far higher and more practical purpose of awarding retribution to men according to their ways. The connection shows plainly that men's ways are here supposed to be estimated according to the purpose and intent of their heart. Their "ways," in the sense of external life, could not be judged righteously save by one who perfectly knows the heart. So the Lord judges not alone by what human eyes can see, as it is written (1 Sam. 16: 7), "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart;" or (as 1 K. 8: 39), "Give thou to every man according to his ways, *whose heart thou knowest*; for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men." H. C.

"I the Lord search the heart." This is true of all that is in the heart; all the thoughts of it, the quickest and those that are most carelessly overlooked by ourselves; all the intents of it, the closest, and those that are most artfully disguised and industriously concealed from others. Men may be imposed upon, but God cannot. He not only searches the heart with a piercing eye, but He tries the reins to pass a judgment upon what He discovers, to give everything its true character and due weight. He tries, as the gold is tried, whether it be standard or no; as the prisoner is tried, whether he be guilty or no. And this judgment which He makes of the heart is in order to His passing judgment upon the man; it is to give to every man according to his ways, according to the desert and tendency of them; life to those that walked in the ways of life, and death to those that persisted in the paths of the destroyer; and according to the fruit of his doings, the effect and influence his doings have had upon

others; or, according to what is settled by the word of God to be the fruit of men's doings, blessings to the obedient, and curses to the disobedient. Therefore God is Judge Himself, and He alone, because He and none besides knows the hearts of the children of men. It is true especially of all the deceitfulness and wickedness of the heart; all its corrupt devices, desires and designs God observes and discerns; and (which is more than any man can do) He judges of the overt act by the heart. God knows more evil of us than we do by ourselves; which is a good reason why we should not flatter ourselves, but always stand in awe of the judgment of God. H.

God knows us in all our motives, through all our concealments, and can set our secret sins—the operation of destroying causes that lie even below our consciousness—in the light of His countenance. When once we discover how competent God is to search and try, we shall then see that it is vain for us to deny what He affirms, to excuse what He condemns, and to make out that we are not responsible when He lays evil at our doors. Y.

We may often think very well of ourselves, when, in fact, our hidden life is pining away and dying; or we may be unhappy and distressed about ourselves when it is really growing daily stronger and more lasting; but it is not hidden from the eyes of God. He sees *it* more than He sees anything else in us. We see all the unrealities; our eyes see shadows and fancies much better than substances—they see all the worldly, earthly, temporary, unreal things; but God sees the true, substantial, eternal things. His eye is on our souls; He sees thoughts; He sees the hidden life, its progress, its healthiness, its growth and strength. He alone knows by whom and how far the life that He gave (the life that He *is*) is cherished, prized, fed and strengthened by prayer and holy obedience, or checked, blighted and languishing by careless cultivation and neglect. *Bp. Moberly.*

11. The covetous man, says Dahler, who heaps up riches by unjust ways, is compared to a bird which hatches the eggs of other fowls. And as the young when hatched, and able at all to shift for themselves, abandon her who is not their mother, and leave her nothing to compensate her trouble; so the covetous man loses those unjustly gotten treasures, and the fruit of his labor.

And at his end shall be a fool. Shall be reputed as such. He was a fool all the way through; he lost his soul to get wealth, and

this wealth he never enjoyed. A. C.—He was a fool all along; sometimes perhaps his own conscience told him so, but at his end he will appear to be so. Those are fools indeed who are fools in their latter end; and such multitudes will prove who were cried up as wise men that did well for themselves (Ps. 49:13, 18). They that get grace will be wise in their latter end, will have the comfort of it in death and the benefit of it to eternity (Prov. 19:20); but they that place their happiness in the wealth of the world, and, right or wrong, will be rich, will rue the folly of it when it is too late to rectify the fatal mistake. This is like the partridge that sits on eggs and hatches them not, but they are broken (as Job 39:15), or stolen (as Isa. 10:14), or they become addle: some sort of fowl there was well known among the Jews, whose case this commonly was. The rich man takes a great deal of pains to get an estate together, and sits brooding upon it, but never has any comfort or satisfaction in it; his projects to enrich himself by sinful courses miscarry and come to nothing. Let us therefore be wise in time; what we get to get it honestly; and what we have to use it charitably; that we may lay up in store a good foundation, and be wise for eternity. H.

Money honestly earned by useful labor of muscle or brain, money honestly made by skill or industry that creates or increases values, is a good and useful thing. Honestly gained and worthily used—used conscientiously, benevolently, devoutly—it is a means of grace and of blessing. But our Lord spoke of the “deceitfulness of riches.” Solemnly He warned His disciples to “beware of covetousness.” The word thus rendered forcibly expresses the passion for accumulation. It is not the diligent earning of money for good and generous uses, but the getting in order to keep and accumulate. Upon no desire of the human mind can the devil operate more successfully to persuade men to try his methods. He has made multitudes believe that his methods of doing business are the only methods that are “practical” or can succeed. Believe that and adopt his methods, calling them “laws of trade” or by any other handsome name, and you are selling yourself to the devil. H. A. Nelson.

Many are the personal temptations always accompanying wealth—temptation to make financial possessions the standard of worth, and to look down on those who are less fortunate as inferiors; temptation to make a selfish and tyrannous use of power (a temptation as great in the commercial world as in the military

and governmental); temptation to use wealth for the gratification of appetite and passion and caprice, prostituting opportunity to purposes of dissipation or idleness; and temptation, above all, to one who sees the constant obsequiousness of those who seek his aid, to “proud haughtiness, that worst sort of pride, because it puts money above manhood, forgetting that a man is really rich or poor, according to what he is, and not according to what he has.” Instead of blaming rich men for not being better, I sometimes wonder, considering how they are beset, that they are as good as they are. For all these reasons, it requires extraordinary grace and force of character to be a rich man, and yet to be a good man. A. J. Brown.

The conclusion of the whole matter is that we are to use the world as not abusing it, and so as not to let it abuse us. Really, what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul! Wealth is a means, not an end. Happy is that man who, owning houses and lands, mills and railways, stocks and bonds, is yet bigger than all these, using them and forbidding them to use him, remembering his God, his Church, his country and his kind, and so utilizing the opportunities of earth to lay up treasure in heaven. This universe is the richer in all ways for every such man. God, multiply them! But equally to be commended is the poor man who is not overcome by the world; who does not envy the rich, or waste his existence in struggling to ape them, or rave at God and society because his lot is what it is, or shut his mind to that blessedness which is higher than what Mammon can bestow. I never chide the laboring classes for their unrest. Much of it is from God. It is the glory and hope of our age that the common man is at last astir and active and must be heeded. Nor are men to blame for wanting more of the world’s valuables. The appetite for gain in itself is no part of our depravity; and the time is coming when, in case of each honest man, it will be gratified. What is sad is that so many of us ignore the true, ultimate meaning of righteous unrest and of righteous desire for gain. Walk with God, get character, faith, life—something to spur good discontent, and good love of possession, and guide them to worthy ends; making one think it of slight moment after all whether he personally owns little or much, so he only lives and acts well; this is the message of Jesus; this is the Gospel for our time. E. B. Andrews.

12-18. Here, as often before, we have the prophet retired for private meditation, and alone

with God. Those ministers that would have comfort in their work must be much so. In his converse here with God and his own heart he takes the liberty, which devout souls sometimes use in their soliloquies, to pass from one thing to another, without tying themselves too strictly to the laws of method and coherence. H.

12. The prophet thinks of God as symbolically enthroned in His earthly temple, "the place of our sanctuary," yet really as filling His eternal throne in the highest heavens. H. C. —As in the preceding verses was set forth the vain dependence of him who seeks to advance himself by indirect methods, so here we are taught the solid foundation which he builds upon who has recourse to the Divine blessing, and seeks to recommend himself to the favor of that Being to whom Israel was taught to look up for support, and whose kingdom from all eternity ruleth over all. *Blayney.*

13. "Ashamed" as usual in the sense of confounded, put to confusion by being utterly disappointed and baffled in every purpose and hope. They that depart from me (God) shall be written in the dust, the sand, with only a perishable record of fame, because they have forsaken the Lord. The allusion to "the fountain," etc., carries our thoughts to chap. 2:13: "They have forsaken" Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out for themselves broken cisterns that cannot hold water. H. C.

Though not stated in so many words, it is cheerily implied that those cleaving to God have their names written whence they can never be erased. For their names are indeed written, as it were, on the heart of God Himself. He cannot either forget or forsake them. They are ever remembered in the wisdom of His thoughts and the resistless movements of His ways. The best thing that can happen to us in purely human relations is to be written in the hearts of those who love us; when they remember us, not because it is their interest to do so, but out of an unselfish fulness of desire for our welfare and happiness. But how much better is it to be thus remembered by God, seeing that with Him there abides a love inexpressibly deeper than any human affection, and, along with this love, a wisdom and power with which even the highest human wisdom and power are not for a moment to be mentioned!

15. The lesson is plain: do not reject truth, or in any wise try to evade it because it comes through some one you do not like. What Jeremiah said here, respecting the character and work of these men, was true; and they do not

deny the truth. They simply ignore the charges, and by one scornful question hint that the threatenings connected with the charges are but as empty words.

16-18. *The prophet's consciousness of integrity.* We may take it that this one question (verse 15), "Where is the word of Jehovah?" stands for a great deal in the way of taunt. The appeal to God, with which the prophet follows up the mention of this question, shows how much he felt the attacks made upon him. It would be too much to say that he did not expostulate with his enemies upon their injustice; but evidently his great resort was to the God who had sent him. If men perversely attributed to him daring imposture and bitter malignity, he could do nothing but fall back on God's knowledge of his course and motives. Y.

16. This verse is a twofold vindication of himself; on the one hand, as toward God, and on the other, as toward the people. On the side toward God he says he has not torn himself away from the work of a prophet, has not refused to follow the manifest will of God in his pastoral work; and on the side toward the people, he had not desired their punishment.

18. The prophet's sympathies are entirely with God, and with righteousness and truth against wickedness, and against those who in this case represented wickedness and had identified themselves with it. Hence these utterances. The issue is fully made between them and me—*them*, as Thine enemies and mine; *me*, as Thy prophet, as the messenger of Thy fearful words of judgment. Now, therefore, let them be confounded and dismayed, and not me. Break them with a double breaking for their shocking blasphemy in which they defy Almighty God! So ends this particular message, full of sharp, searching, solemn truth, indicating plainly that, as between the people on the one hand, and the prophet and his Divine Master on the other, matters were hastening to their crisis.

19-27. The remaining portion of this chapter enjoins the sacred observance of the Sabbath, and makes large promises on condition of obedience. Obviously obedience, in this case, is understood to imply obedience in other duties, and the spirit of obedience generally; else such promises could not attach to it. Besides, it is simply impossible that there can ever be the spirit of obedience in any one thing, and not the general spirit of obedience as to all known duty. The prophet is to proclaim this message specially in the one gate through which the king went in and out, and then in all the gates

of the city, as being the place of public resort where people "most did congregate." H. C.

21. From this and the following verses we find the ruin of the Jews attributed to the breach of the Sabbath; as this led to a neglect of sacrifice, the ordinances of religion and all public worship, so it necessarily brought with it all immorality. The *breach* of the *Sabbath* was that which let in upon them all the *waters of God's wrath*. A. C.

The *meaning* of the Sabbath is to be known from the Old Testament alone. The chief passages relating to it are Gen. 2:3; Ex. 20:11; 31:13-17, the essential matter of which is as follows: God created the world in six days, and rested on the seventh, and therefore blessed and hallowed this day, on which His work was complete. Hence the people whom He has consecrated to Himself, and who acknowledge the Creator and Lord of the world as their God, are also to hallow the seventh day as a day of rest after every six days' labor in the works of their calling, and this is to be a sign of the covenant between God and His people. These propositions contain the following thoughts: 1. Man, like God, is to work and to rest; thus human life is to be a copy of Divine life. But especially must the people who are called to be the instrument of restoring the Divine order in earthly life be seen to be the peculiar possession of the living God, by an alternation of work and rest corresponding with the rhythm of the Divine life. 2. Divine labor terminates in happy rest; not till the Creator rests satisfied in the contemplation of His works is His creation itself complete. So, too, human labor is not to run on in resultless circles, but to terminate in a happy harmony of existence. The idea of the Sabbath, however, extends farther. That the whole course of human history is not to run on in dreary endlessness; that its events are to have a positive termination; are to find a completion in an harmonious and God-given order—is already guaranteed by the Sabbath of creation and prefigured by the sabbatical seasons. The Divine rest of the seventh day of creation, which has no evening, hovers over the world's progress, that it may at last absorb it into itself. It is upon the very fact that the rest of God is also to be a rest for man, and that God has declared this by the institution of the Sabbath, that Heb. 4 founds a proof for the proposition: "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." *Oehler*.

We regard the Sabbath festival as ante-legal—in other words, as an institution of Paradise. The institution *received* its *legal* character for the

first time in connection with the giving of the law at Sinai, and *lost* it again through the love which, in the New Testament, is the fulfilment of the law; but the *institution* of the Sabbath continued to exist after the law was fulfilled, as it had already existed before the law was given, and it is destined to continue until it has attained to its fulfilment and completion in the eternal Sabbath of the creature. *Kurtz*.

From the very beginning God has seen fit to appoint outward types and emblems of spiritual things and rites of worship. From the beginning one day in seven has been set apart and consecrated to religion. And we know that under the patriarchal and mosaic dispensations there were recognized sanctuaries, places dedicated to worship, where men put off the shoes from their feet because it was holy ground. And as to the teachings of the New Testament we know that our Saviour honored the Sabbath, that He attended the synagogue and took part in its services; and that on two memorable occasions He drove the merchants and money-changers out of the temple which they profaned.

If religion is to exist in the world as a spiritual force, it must manifest itself in some outward shape. It must have some local habitation and be incarnated in some visible form. The Gospel of the secular life ignores man's material nature and environment. It is a hyper-spiritualism. It would make us all Quakers. Undoubtedly it is true that the strongest bias of our nature is toward the outward and the material. There is a temptation to put holy water and consecrated oil in place of the spirit; to make the kingdom of God consist in meats and drinks instead of righteousness; and we need to be often reminded that the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and contrite heart. But if there is danger in the direction of ritualism, there is danger also in the direction of Quakerism and mysticism. In this matter the *via media* is the true and safe way. God is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, but He is to be worshipped; and all sincere worship will find outward expression. It will clothe itself in articulate forms. It will not disdain the use of those means of grace which devout souls have always found helpful. A religion that never goes to church and that contributes nothing to the support of the Gospel may be a very refined and ethereal sort of religion, but it can hardly thrive in this world. It is doubtful whether it will even do its possessor much good, and certainly his light will not shine upon the path of others. The

time may come when holiness to the Lord shall be written upon the bells of the horses and there shall be no distinction between sacred and profane, because the earth shall be filled with righteousness and with the glory of the Lord. But that day seems far off. We still need our Sabbaths and our sanctuaries, our sacred places and seasons. They are not religion, but they are helps toward it.

Interior.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTERS XVIII., XIX., XX.

- 18 : 1, 2** THE word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought his work on the wheels. And when the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.
- 5, 6** Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it; if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD: Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your doings. But they say, There is no hope: for we will walk after our own devices, and we will do every one after the stubbornness of his evil heart.
- 13** Therefore thus saith the LORD: Ask ye now among the nations, who hath heard such things; the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing. Shall the snow of Lebanon fall from the rock of the field? or shall the cold waters that flow down from afar be dried up?
- 15** For my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity; and they have caused them to stumble in their ways, in the ancient paths, to walk in bypaths, in a way not cast up; to make their land an astonishment, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and shake his head. I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will look upon their back, and not their face, in the day of their calamity.
- 18** Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.
- 19** Give heed to me, O LORD, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me. Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember how I stood before thee to speak good for them, to turn away thy fury from them. Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and give them over to the power of the sword; and let their wives become childless, and widows; and let their men be slain of death, and their young men smitten of the sword in battle. Let a cry be heard from their houses, when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them: for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet. Yet, LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me; forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight: but let them be overthrown before thee; deal thou with them in the time of thine anger.
- 19 : 1** Thus said the LORD, Go, and buy a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the elders of the people, and of the elders of the priests; and go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the gate Harsith, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell

3 thee : and say, Hear ye the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem ; thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place,
 4 the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle. Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, whom they knew not, they and their fathers and the kings of Judah ; and have filled this place with the blood
 5 of innocents ; and have built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons in the fire for burnt offerings unto Baal ; which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind :
 6 therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that this place shall no more be called
 7 Topheth, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of Slaughter. And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place ; and I will cause them to fall
 by the sword before their enemies, and by the hand of them that seek their life : and their carcases will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.
 8 And I will make this city an astonishment, and an hissing ; every one that passeth thereby
 9 shall be astonished and hiss because of all the plagues thereof. And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend, in the siege and in the straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek
 10 their life, shall straiten them. Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that
 11 go with thee, and shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts : Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again :
 12 and they shall bury in Topheth, till there be no place to bury. Thus will I do unto this
 13 place, saith the LORD, and to the inhabitants thereof, even making this city as Topheth : and the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, which are defiled, shall be as the place of Topheth, even all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods.
 14 Then came Jeremiah from Topheth, whither the LORD had sent him to prophesy ; and he
 15 stood in the court of the LORD's house, and said to all the people : Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it ; because they have made their neck stiff, that they might not hear my words.

20 : 1 Now Pashhur the son of Immer the priest, who was chief officer in the house of
 2 the LORD, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things. Then Pashhur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the upper gate of Benjamin, which was in
 3 the house of the LORD. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashhur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The LORD hath not called thy
 4 name Pashhur, but Magor-missabib. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends : and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it : and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive to Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword.
 5 Moreover I will give all the riches of this city, and all the gains thereof, and all the precious things thereof, yea, all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their
 6 enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon. And thou, Pashhur, and all that dwell in thine house shall go into captivity : and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and there shalt thou be buried, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied falsely.

7 O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived : thou art stronger than I, and hast
 8 prevailed : I am become a laughingstock all the day, every one mocketh me. For as often as I speak, I cry out ; I cry, Violence and spoil : because the word of the LORD is made a
 9 reproach unto me, and a derision, all the day. And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in mine heart as it were a burning fire shut up
 10 in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain. For I have heard the defaming of many, terror on every side. Denounce, and we will denounce him, say all my
 familiar friends, they that watch for my halting : peradventure he will be enticed, and we
 11 shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him. But the LORD is with me as a mighty one and a terrible : therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail : they shall be greatly ashamed, because they have not dealt wisely, even with an
 12 everlasting dishonour which shall never be forgotten. But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous, that seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them ; for unto

13 thee have I revealed my cause. Sing unto the LORD, praise ye the LORD : for he hath delivered the soul of the needy from the hand of evil-doers.

14 Cursed be the day wherein I was born : let not the day wherein my mother bare me be
15 blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is
16 born unto thee ; making him very glad. And let that man be as the cities which the LORD
overthrew, and repented not : and let him hear a cry in the morning, and shouting at noon-
17 tide ; because he slew me not from the womb ; and so my mother should have been my
18 grave, and her womb always great. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour
and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame ?

Chap. 18. The prophecies and transactions contained in this and the two following chapters successively hang together, and must be referred to some part of the three first years of the reign of Jehoiakim. The prophet is shown, first, under the type of the potter, God's absolute authority over nations and kingdoms to regulate and alter their condition at His own discretion (verses 1-10). He is then directed to exhort the people to avert the evil designed them by repentance and amendment ; and upon their refusal to charge them with the guilt of unprecedented revolt, and to foretell their destruction (verses 11-17). They conspire against him : he protesteth against their unmerited and ungrateful persecution of him, and calleth for justice against them. *Blayney.*

In chaps. 18 and 19 we must recognize symbolic transactions in real life. Here, too, the proof of this lies in the form of the statement : " Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there will I cause thee to hear my words." Here is something to be done before the revelation proper from the Lord even begins. More still to our argument is the implication (verse 6) that the house of Israel are witnesses of what was done by the potter. " O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter ?" This, of course, locates the scene in the external world. So in chap. 19, something is to be actually done in the outer world : " Go and get thee a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people, etc., and go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee." A part of this message stands (verses 3-9), and then in verse 10 the Lord said, " Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee, and say, Thus saith the Lord, Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again."

Here we have the usual criteria of actuality. Things are to be *said* and *done* by the prophet—not merely *seen* in vision ; and they are to be said and done before the eyes of the people.

There can be no doubt that this is a symbolic transaction. It stands, therefore, as further proof of a constant Divine care and purpose to distinguish between visions and things of actual life, done for the greater effect through the power of symbol.

A potter making earthen vessels from clay is the text for this discourse, the great doctrine being that God can mould and shape the destinies of nations with equal ease and with absolute control.

1-4. For the sake of more deeply impressing the truth which the Lord would teach both the prophet and the people, He directs Jeremiah to go down to the workshop of the potter and see him construct his earthen vessel. The reader need scarcely be told that this operation was probably performed then substantially as it is now—*i.e.*, upon a horizontal revolving wheel, the centrifugal force being depended on largely to give shape to the plastic clay. In this case his first efforts did not succeed, and he forthwith massed the same material and made a second effort, assuming of course his *right*, and showing his *power* to do anything with his clay that he chose. Using this case as an illustration, the Lord proceeds to assert His analogous right and power to determine and shape the destiny of nations at His pleasure. Let it be noted that this illustration is not used here to show that God makes and moulds the free moral activities of men, even the free action of their will, according to His absolute pleasure, allowing to them no more responsibility or activity than the clay has in the potter's hand. This is neither asserted nor implied here. This is not by any means the point of the comparison ; but the point is, as we shall soon see, that God can speak concerning a nation to pull it down and destroy it, or to build it up, and instantly the agencies of His providence prove themselves perfectly adequate for this result. With infinite ease He can say this and *do it*. The reader will specially note the bearing of this case upon the theory of interpretation held by some which

assumes that where inspired prophets were commanded to *go* and to *do*, it was going and doing *in vision only*, and not in actual fact. Was not this most obviously a *fact*? Was not this man at the wheel a living, working potter, and the whole thing a scene in the outward living world? How can this be rationally doubted? H. C.

We have, like Jeremiah, in the words of Scripture, gone down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. Before him is a revolving horizontal disk; beside him a heap of clay. Seizing a handful of the clay, he throws it down, a rude, unformed, shapeless mass, on the flying wheel; and how curious it is to see that lump, as it spins round and round, begin at the touch of his skilful fingers to lose its shapelessness, assume a definite form, and by and by swell out and rise up into a vessel of perfect proportions. It is more than curious; it is instructive. One cannot watch the plastic clay growing to the workman's will and touch into a vessel for common or sacred uses, for roughest hands or jewelled fingers, without seeing God in the potter, and man in the clay—feeling the beauty of Scripture figures, and how much ourselves and fortunes are in the hands of Him who said, "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in Mine hand, O house of Israel." Shall the thing made say of him that made it, Why hast thou made me thus? *T. Guthrie*.

1-6. Than in this passage nowhere do we get a more striking view of the general method of the Divine dealings with the human race. It suggests:

God's absolute sovereignty over the being and life of every man. The figure of the potter and the clay is one of frequent occurrence in Holy Scripture. (See Job 10:9; Isa. 64:8; Rom. 9:10.) It vividly represents the subjection of our nature and our personal history to the Divine control. The fact of our moral freedom, the mysterious prerogative that belongs to us of choosing and following our own way, must needs make the comparison defective. There is some point at which all such physical analogies fail duly to set forth the realities of moral and spiritual life. But it is deeply true as suggestive of the power God has over us to mould us as He pleases. Free as our will may be, is not our whole nature as plastic material in the hands of Him who made us? Free as we may be to pursue our own chosen course of life, can we ever escape the "Divinity that

shapes our ends"? There is a hidden power, whether we acknowledge it or not, the mastery of which over thought, feeling, purpose and action is the deepest reality of our existence.

His formative purpose. Distinguish between a sovereign power and one that is arbitrary and capricious. Complete as the Divine mastery over us may be, it is not lawless or purposeless. It has always a definite end in view, and that end is wise and holy and good. As the potter seeks to fashion the clay into some beautiful or useful form that his own brain has first conceived, so God, by His providential and spiritual control, seeks to work out a Divine idea in our being and life, to body forth in us some archetype of moral beauty that exists in His own eternal mind. He would fain fashion us into a noble form and fit us for some noble use. In God's "great house" there are many utilities. And even the vessel "unto dishonor" has its place and its purpose. Our faith in the infinitely wise and holy love that governs all leads us to rest in the thought:

"That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroyed
Or cast as rubbish to the void.
When God hath made the pile complete."

But He who formed us for Himself would not have any of us to be content with an inferior position and a lower aim. He would so mould and fashion us that we shall be "vessels unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use" (2 Tim. 2:21).

His long-suffering patience. When the potter's work is marred, he presses the clay into a shapeless mass and casts it upon the wheel again. We are reminded of the various methods God employs in moulding us to His will, and how if one fails He will often subject us to another. There are events that sometimes break up the whole form of a man's life; old ties are severed, old associations pass away; he begins an altogether new career, with new responsibilities, new moral tests, new possibilities of good. There are afflictions that change the whole tenor of a man's inward life; his spirit is crushed, wounded, softened, that it may the better receive Divine impressions. "God maketh my heart soft," etc. (Job 23:16). "My heart is like wax" (Ps. 22:14). Thus does God "humble us to prove us, to know what is in our heart, whether we will keep His commandments or not" (De. 8:2). There may come a time when all these Divine methods fail and the soul is found to be reprobate. In chap. 19:1-11 we have a figurative prophecy of the ultimate abandon-

ment of the Jewish people to their fate. In this case the vessel has been baked in the fire; it is incapable of taking a new shape, and is broken so "that it cannot be made whole again." Such is the doom of the finally impenitent and intractable. But God's patience is very wonderful. In this world at least the door of mercy is always open. There is always the possibility of a new and nobler life. He "is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). W.

God has absolute *authority* over us. He has the ultimate right of supreme sovereignty to do as He will with His subjects. Yet there is nothing alarming in this fact, but rather an infinite consolation. For God is not a heartless despot, displaying arbitrary power by mere caprice; He is holy, and exercises His sovereignty according to principles of strict justice, truth and right. He is gracious, and rules with purposes of love for the good of His creatures. Our dependence on God is, like that of the infant on its mother, the security of our own welfare. Those applications of the doctrine of Divine sovereignty which attribute to it designs that would be accounted cruel in any responsible being are blasphemous insults to the impartial justice and love of God's character. If God's actions are not limited by any physical compulsion or constitutional law, they are governed by His regard to eternal righteousness and by the beneficence of His nature. *Adeney.*

As the clay is in the potter's hand to destroy the incipient form of one vessel and to mould it into a new and better one, so are the nations of men in God's hand, to mar and destroy, or to build up and bless at His pleasure. This is the point of the comparison. There is no occasion to deny that this involves various agencies of Divine providence upon the free moral activities of men. Such agencies God is every day exerting, yet with no infringement upon the freedom of the human will. God here shows that He exercises His agency so as to meet their moral state precisely, sparing the penitent and destroying the incorrigibly wicked. H. C.

The purpose of God with regard to man is essentially and persistently a creative one. The first effort of the potter is formative; and when, through the marring of the vessel, he has to reduce the clay into the lump again, there still remains an intention to form anew. The effects of sin are shown to be profound from the fact that the potter is obliged to remake what has been marred. The effort of re-

storing love succeeds upon another, and "where sin abounded grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). There is no nation which has not had many opportunities of recovering its position and influence forfeited by unfaithfulness and unbelief, and there is no sinner hardened in his sins who has not repeatedly rejected a heavenly voice. Each proclamation of God's Word is a fresh opportunity which may avail for salvation to every one who will embrace it. M.

Our wisdom is to turn from our hardness and impenitent hearts, and allow God to lead us into the full *perávoia* (Rom. 2:4). Then with understanding shall we address God, "We are the clay, and Thou our potter" (Isa. 64:8). If we by repentance come back to God and make ourselves clay, such as will have in it a peculiar responsiveness to the touch of God, then we may leave ourselves to His loving-kindness. He will fashion us into just that shape whereby we shall be meet for the Master's service. And if men say in their ignorance that we are turning out but vessels of dishonor, let us recollect that of honor and dishonor God alone is judge. If we only stoop from our pride to do the will of God, God will take care of our position. For is not God He who exalts the humble and abases the proud? Y.

Every life has not the same purpose. The potter makes vessels of innumerable shapes. Yet each life is successful as its own particular purpose is fulfilled. A life is no failure because it is lowly and put only to lowly uses so long as it attains the end for which God designed it. It is important to note that God's first work with us is in forming our own souls aright. The first question is not as to what we do, but as to what we are. The potter is making vessels; God is making characters, souls, lives. After *this* we may be put to some further end—used for good after we have been made right, as the vessel is of service after the potter has done his work with it. *Adeney.*

7-10. *God's action determined by man's conduct.* These verses may be read as balancing those that precede. The illustration of the potter at his work shows us simply the Divine side of life. The following verses take us round to the human side, and the human conditions in accordance with which God exercises the rights and power of His absolute sovereignty. God does not act blindly, inconsiderately, on general principles alone, without regard to individual cases, nor with one changeless course irrespective of the changes in the behavior of His creatures. He takes note of these changes and

modifies His treatment of men by their varying requirements. This fact is not derogatory to the *absolute sovereignty* of God. A just sovereign considers his people. God acts according to His own will; but His will, though inflexible in moral principles, varies in the choice of particular actions according as the application of those principles varies with the circumstances of the world. This fact is not inconsistent with the *definiteness of the purposes* of God. The potter has his definite design, yet he proceeds with his work to the conclusion or breaks up the clay and begins again, according as he finds it plastic or brittle. *Adeney.*

God does not threaten evil because He is resolved to inflict it, rather, He threatens it that we may by our repentance prevent it, and so He may not inflict it. "He foretelleth," saith Chrysostom, "what He will bring upon us for this very purpose, that He may not bring it upon us; and warneth before He striketh to make us careful to avoid the stroke." God sends His servants, the prophets, to threaten vengeance against sinners, not thereby to drive them from hope of mercy, but to draw them to repentance and humiliation. Nor is it to be accounted among the least of God's mercies that, when He might in His just displeasure overwhelm us in the very act of sin, yet He forbear-eth and forewarneth, foretelleth and threateneth us before He punish; that if we will take any warning, He may do better to us than He hath said, and not bring upon us what He hath threatened. *Bp. Sanderson.*

From these verses we may infer that God's promises in Scripture, however uttered in general terms, are yet for the most part to be understood conditionally, according as men behave themselves. And as God did justly reject those Jews who refused to embrace the Gospel, notwithstanding the general promises He had made to that people, so neither can particular Christians nor churches lay any claim to God's general promise of preserving His Church any further than as they adhere to that rule of faith and manners which He hath prescribed to them in His holy word. *W. Louth.*

It is righteousness alone that exalteth a nation. Repentance toward God, flowing from faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, is the only effectual means for preventing the ruin of a sinful people. Without this we may obtain a temporary respite from punishment; but the clouds will return again after the rain; and all the while we are filling up the measure of our iniquity, the consumption is advancing, and every day we draw nearer and nearer to disso-

lution. Whereas, if we accept of the punishment of our iniquity, and put away from us those evil doings which provoke the Lord to jealousy, then may we hope that He will return to us in mercy, and rejoice over us to bless us and to do us good according to this encouraging promise. *R. W.*

The Bible is pervaded by the idea of nations as moral personalities, as true political or organic entities, as moral powers to whom are addressed the most solemn admonitions, the most emphatic warnings of a retribution that will surely come, though, it may be, generations, and even ages, after the then composing individual masses have passed away from the earthly existence. Along with this appears everywhere that other idea of the Messianic lordship. It is so distinctly set forth that any nation denying it, or refusing its acknowledgment in some way, by word or deed, must be regarded as having forfeited the Christian name. The passages are too numerous to be cited. . . . God, law and retribution are the articles that enter into the theology of every nation. To the Christian State there belongs a fourth, without which it utterly forfeits the Christian title. This is the article of Messiah's dominion, or the rule of One as God's vicegerent, whom He hath appointed Judge of the nations, and to whom "there is given," for this end, "all power in heaven and upon the earth." *T. Lewis.*

Without religion no nation can feel itself secure. Ungodliness provokes the anger of the Lord, and, like Israel of old, the nation that neglects religion and gives itself up to iniquity, will not be able to stand before its enemies. It may truly be said of such, *their defence is departed from them*, for, by so doing, they incur the displeasure of Him who is the only sure *defence and refuge in the day of trouble*. Warriors and statesmen may affect to despise all this, while they put their trust in human wisdom and prowess, but God can soon teach them that it is religion alone that can render a country truly invincible; and that the prayers of the godly are more to be trusted than swords of steel—the sighs of true penitence a surer safeguard than all the thunders of artillery. Religion is, in truth, "the cheap defence of nations." *Symington.*

The constructive and positive power, which by a slow and persistent process builds society up into a temple of order, truth and justice—this it is which the world has, in all past ages, been groping after. Christianity is this power, and no other has yet been discovered, or ever will be. It is light streaming out from God;

it is the inbreathing love of God ; it is holy Sabbaths, and voices of prayer, and hymns of praise, and the prophet-teacher speaking as God's voice to men—these with all the charities, and good works, and gentle ministries, and deeds of righteous magistracy, and regenerative public cares—these, which altogether are the meaning of the word religion—these, and these only, can make a State prosperous and happy. *Bushnell.*

The State needs a morality. She cannot with any consistency refuse to recognize the morality which the majority of her citizens consider as the true and the Divine. That morality, in the Christian system, is a portion—a vital portion indeed, but not the entirety of the Christian religion. The State as a State takes for its secular uses the morality, but is compelled also in the oath, the rest-day and the marriage contract to give a distant nod of recognition to religion, as furnishing the requisite sanctions of this morality. But while the State in mass stops short with the morality, the several citizens of the State, in their individual immortality and in their accountability beyond the bounds of this world, have larger and more lasting wants than the collective State ; they need personally and of free conviction to adopt the religion. And without a large, active, prayerful and resolute body of such citizens, so holding individually the religion, the morality of the State will not be kept in working order. The State may indeed have no conscience of her own ; but unless her citizens many of them keep a conscience, she is lost. Christ does not need the State, but *the State needs Christ* as the base and bond of her morality, without which she cannot shape or keep her political life. And every man, woman and child in the State needs Christ, as the Ruler, Owner and Redeemer of the soul for both worlds and for all days, here and beyond. And He, the Thrice Blessed, invites them to His salvation. *William R. Williams.*

11, 12. God changes the way of His providential proceeding according to the carriage of the creature, without changing His will, which is the rule of His providence. When God speaks of His repenting that He had made man (Gen. 6 : 6), it is only His changing His conduct from a way of kindness to a way of severity, and is a word suited to our capacities to signify His detestation of sin and His resolution to punish it, after man had made himself quite another thing than God had made him. "It repents Me"—that is, I am purposed to destroy the world, as he that repents of his work throws

it away ; as if a potter cast away the vessel he had framed, it were a testimony that he repented that ever he took pains about it : so the destruction of them seems to be a repentance in God that ever He made them ; it is a change of events, not of counsels. Repentance in us is a grief for a former fact, and a changing of our course in it. Grief is not in God, but His repentance is a willing a thing should not be as it was, which will was fixed from eternity ; for God, foreseeing man would fall, and decreeing to permit it, He could not be said to repent in time of what He did not repent from eternity ; and, therefore, if there were no repentance in God from eternity, there could be none in time. *Charnock.*

These verses plainly teach that all God's threatenings, even the most terrible, and all God's promises, even the most blessed, are *conditional on the continuance of the moral character to which they were addressed.* When one would give the alarm of fire he does not whisper the word. So when God would warn sinners He does not soften His words, but in most vivid manner sets before men the awful doom of the ungodly. Thus would God, by His terrors, affright men—if naught else will do—to "flee from the wrath to come," so that "He may repent of the evil He thought to do unto them." Such words are not the utterance of absolute decrees against any soul to whom they are addressed, but loving warnings to such soul to turn to God and live. C.

11. *Amend (or make good) your ways and your doings.* It has been well said that "there is nothing at all in life except what we put there." God has given us far more liberty than we usually suppose ; He has put at our command immense resources, and told us to go on and use them to the best advantage. We can throw them away if we choose, or we can make of them wealth inestimable. He has given us the potter's wheel and ample beds of clay, to do with as we please. But there is no value in this wealth of means unless it is used for right ends. It is, in truth, not wealth until it is utilized. Life can be a bubble, a vacancy, a failure, if we so will it. It can be a solid world of worth, and a success if we so will it. God has made man in His own image ; and in so doing He has made him, in a sense, his own creator. S. S. T.

There are but two principles of moral life in the universe : one which makes ourselves, or the most limited private good, the centre ; the other which makes God, who may be called the universal good, the centre. And by that

necessary law which says, Where there is life there must be a principle of life ; when one of these principles dies, the other emerges from its state of abeyance and inactivity, and takes the place of that which has passed away. So that when self dies in the soul, God lives ; when self is annihilated, God is enthroned. So it must be that either self or God shall occupy the throne of the heart. If self, then the life is regulated from a selfish standpoint. If God is at the helm, then everything will move Godward. We should never be satisfied unless God is on the throne. *F. W. Upham.*

Much may be made of slender gifts, small resources and limited opportunities, if carefully cultivated as they should be, and as their slenderness should stimulate their being. The most largely endowed has no more obligation and no fairer field than the most slenderly gifted lies under and possesses. God, who has builded up the towering Alps out of mica flakes, builds up His Church out of infinitesimally small particles—slenderly endowed men, touched by the consecration of His love. If we truly employ whatever gifts God has given to us, then we shall be accepted according to that we have and not according to that we have not. The wholesome old proverb, "Many mickles make a muckle" is as true about the influence brought to bear in this world to arrest evil and to sweeten corruption as it is about anything else. Christ has a great deal more need of the cultivation of the small patches that He gives to most of us than He has of the cultivation of the large estates that He bestows upon a few. Responsibility is not to be measured by amount of gift, but is equally stringent, entire and absolute whatsoever be the measure of the endowments from which it arises. *A. M.*

The most successful man is not the man who acquires the most money, power, place, honor or fame, but the man who gains the most manhood, and performs the greatest amount of useful work in the discharge of human duty, whose life is most replete with useful purpose and well-directed effort. *Anon.*

More sublime than sculptured stone, or snow-crowned Alps, or sweetest music, or richest rhetoric is a noble life. Manhood dwarfs the most magnificent of things inanimate. Royalty of spirit may be uninvested with the circumstances of external grandeur. The noble heart may look out upon the world through a face that is homely. It may move upon a plane that is lowly. It may spend its energies upon endeavors that are ordinary. Its possessor may be "in bodily presence weak, and in speech

contemptible," but let head and hand and heart be welded together in the furnace glow of a lofty and uplifting purpose, and men recognize the king. *Howard Duffield.*

Let this and every dawn of morning be to you as the beginning of life, and let every setting sun be to you as its close ; let every one of these short lives leave its sure record of some kindly thing done for others—some goodly strength or knowledge gained for yourselves. *Ruskin.*

12. This subtle resort to the plea of no hope indicates a deep-seated love of sin and a willingness to cheat one's own soul out of the blessings that God proffers rather than be disturbed in the ways and pleasures of sin. *H. C.*—This assertion in the meaning designed by those who thus responded to the prophet's solemn annunciation, and as uttered or cherished in similar meaning by any and all others unto this day, *is accurately true.* That meaning was simply a deliberate *resolve* of continuance in their long-accustomed evil way. There is no hope, they *truly* said. If we may not be delivered unless we return from and change our way of life, we must utterly despair of deliverance, for we are *resolved* that we will submit to no restraint, "we will walk after our own devices, we will every one do every one after the stubbornness of his evil heart." And the inward thought of all who are thus resolved is, though they dare not speak it out, We will venture the issue with the Almighty. And of those who take this bold, defiant position, it is true that there is no hope. The whole Word of God affirms it—the character, the law, the very grace of God, require and declare that they who wilfully assume this position must abide its consequences, and die in their sins. *B.*

14. The idea is, that Lebanon, lifting its crest into the regions of perpetual snow, supplies to the fields within its range the purest, cool, luscious water all the year, even as God supplies good for His trusting people ; and it is therefore sheer folly for men to forsake God, or fear that He will fail to supply their need. *H. C.*—One of the most striking scenes visible from a great distance is Hermon, with its snow and vapors. It is covered with white snow all the year round, and from its summits flow down cold, pent-up streams to the valley beneath. God asks why Israel has forsaken Him ; whether there was any failure of His grace and power. Has He not been constant and ever ready to help ? How is it, then, that He is forsaken ? The snow of Lebanon is, like the dew of Hermon, a symbol of the grace of God abiding

upon Zion, from which the streams of grace flow forth in inexhaustible supply. M.

18. *Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices.* The people to whom Jeremiah had delivered his message from God seem to have been incensed against him on much the same ground as the Jews were in aftertimes against our Saviour and His apostles. They had persuaded themselves that God had intended for them a perpetual establishment; and would accordingly provide them with a constant succession of men in all departments to preserve and maintain the general welfare—viz., priests to direct all matters of law and religion; wise statesmen to manage their civil concerns, and prophets to make known to them the immediate will of God on all important and extraordinary occasions. Upon this presumption they inferred that Jeremiah, who foretold the contrary, was a false prophet, and as such they determined to punish him. *Blayney.*—The people turn against Jeremiah to counteract his mission, and to accuse him before the civil authorities, “smiting him with the tongue.” They will not believe his affirmation that their priests, wise men and prophets were deceiving them, and really had no word from the Lord.

19, 20. The prophet looks to his God for help in this emergency. He implores the Lord to hear what they say against him. He bears his case to God with confidence, because conscious of having sought to do right, faithfully and benevolently as toward both God and the people. He had done them good; shall they be allowed to requite him with evil?

21-23. The spirit of this prayer is due to the prophet's deep sympathy with truth and righteousness; to his sense of what the cause and honor of God demand, and to his consciousness that he had honestly and with much benevolent self-sacrifice labored to reclaim and save the people, albeit they were proving themselves hopelessly and madly incorrigible. Hence what else could he do? Shall he succumb and make up his mind to let wickedness rule in rampant defiance of God and of all righteousness? Nay, verily, there are sometimes imperative reasons why guilty men should be given up to exterminating judgments. Justice demands it, and even Mercy has no more to say in bar or even delay of retribution. H. C.

It is important to remember that he is distinctly conscious of having had good motives toward these enemies. He knew that God meant their good, and he, in speaking, had meant the same. It must be noticed also that, whatever his feelings, he expresses them as a

prayer to God. He does not take retaliation into his own hands. His rights and interests, whatever they are, he leaves in the hands of Jehovah. He has, indeed, his own estimate as to what his enemies deserve; but he seeks that they may get their deserts in the way of manifestly Divine judgments. Y.

Chap. 19. This chapter and the next are closely connected in time and occasion, the former being the prophetic message and the latter a history of some of its results in the persecution of Jeremiah and his consequent mental conflicts. The horrid forms of the existing idolatry, as well as the persecution of the prophet, must locate it in time *after* Josiah's death, and indeed down very near to the end of the kingdom. The siege described (verse 9) must have been the final one in the time of Zedekiah. Probably this message did not precede the final siege by any long interval. The occasion is one: its circumstances are solemnly impressive and significant. The prophet is directed to purchase an earthen bottle; to take some of the elders of the people and of the priests with him to Tophet in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and there deliver his message, predicting the utter ruin of the city, fearful slaughter, terrible famine, burying in Tophet till there shall be no more room for graves; and then to break the bottle before their eyes as a symbol of the complete though temporary destruction of the city and nation. He then returns from Tophet to the city; goes into the Temple, and there repeats before all the people the substance of this fearful threatening. H. C.

1-11. Parables need not be in words; they may be acted; and sometimes men inspired of God have, instead of telling, acted them with dramatic power. “Go,” said the Lord to Jeremiah, “and get a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests; and go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee.” To his summons they assemble, and the preacher appears—nor book, nor speech in hand, but an earthen vessel. He addresses them. Pointing across the valley to Jerusalem, with busy thousands in its streets, its massive towers and noble Temple, glorious and beautiful beneath a southern sky, he says, speaking as an ambassador of God: “I will make this city desolate, and a hissing: every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss: I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, in the siege and straitness wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives,

shall straiten them." He pauses, raises his arm, holds up the potter's vessel, dashes it on the ground, and, planting his foot on its shivered fragments, he adds: "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Even so will I break this people and this city as one breaketh a potter's vessel." The scene, the aspect of the man, the beautiful but fragile vase, the crash, the shivered fragments, these all-important aids to the speaker, were calculated to make an impression through the senses and the fancy, much deeper than the mere message could possibly have done. *Guthrie.*

This chapter is filled with these awful warnings of the prophet. And they are made the more awful by the reflection that, fitted as they were to rouse the most careless and hardened, yet they failed with those to whom they were addressed. And so this sad chapter teaches us such lessons as these: *The earnest purpose of God to save man from his sin.* Hence these warnings. *The awfully hardening power of the sin which could despise them.* What wise methods are to be employed in the endeavor to arouse and alarm the ungodly. C.

4, 5. "They have filled the place with the blood of innocent ones." This can mean nothing less than burning to death great multitudes of young children. Is it strange that God should doom the nation to a most fearful ruin as the least He could do to express His detestation of these murders, and as His only hope for redeeming a remnant from idolatry, since the nation as such were demoralized by this sin past hope?

7, 8. So usually in God's order the cup of madness comes before the cup of doom. First wisdom and then might would fail them. That the city should not only be desolate, but be an object of scorn to all passers-by, indicates that the Gentile nations had some general knowledge of the guilt and crimes which had provoked God to these fearful visitations of His wrath. A great city and a strong nation blotted out from among the nations, and lying desolate for seventy years, must be in any age of the world a fearfully solemn and impressive moral lesson, testifying before even heathen minds to the wrath of their gods. Must we not suppose that to some extent they knew the ingratitude, the rebellion against their own God, the horrible immoralities and the murders of innocent children which had called forth His vengeance?

9. This very doom—parents eating the flesh of their offspring—had been predicted long before as Jehovah's curse upon them for these

sins. (See Lev. 26 : 29 and De. 28 : 53.) This siege continued one year and a half (Jer. 52 : 4-7), "Until the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land." In his Lamentations (4 : 10) the prophet has recorded the fulfilment of this dreadful doom: "The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people." Verily the hand of retributive justice was in this, that parents who had thrust their own sons and daughters into the fire to burn them to death for Baal and Moloch should be straitened by war, siege and famine, to boil and eat their own children! H. C.

11. As the bottle was easily, irresistibly and irrecoverably broken, so shall Judah and Jerusalem be broken by the Chaldean army (verse 11). They depended much upon the firmness of their constitution and the fixedness of their courage, which they thought hardened them like a vessel of brass; but the prophet shows that all that did but harden them like a vessel of earth, which, though hard, is brittle, and sooner broken than that which is not so hard. Though they were made vessels of honor, still they were vessels of earth, and so they shall be made to know, if they dishonor God and themselves, and serve not the purposes for which they were made. It is God Himself who made them, that resolves to unmake them: I will break this people, and this city—dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel—the doom of the heathen (Ps. 2 : 9; Rev. 2 : 27); but now Jerusalem's doom (Isa. 30 : 14). A potter's vessel, when once broken, cannot be made whole again—cannot be cured, so the word is. The ruin of Jerusalem shall be an utter ruin; no hand can repair it but His that broke it; and if they return to Him, though He has torn, He will heal.

12. "I will make this city as Tophet." As they had filled the valley of Tophet with the slain which they sacrificed to their idols, so God will fill the whole city with the slain, that shall fall as sacrifices to the justice of God.

15. Whatever men may think to the contrary, the executions of Providence will fully answer the predictions of the word; and God will appear as terrible against sin and sinners as the Scripture makes Him; nor shall the unbelief of men make either His promise or His threatenings of no effect. H.

The people are repeatedly apprised that these judgments are coming, and must come because they are hardening their heart and refusing to hear the words of the Lord. Everything here indicates that the great crisis is at hand. The

threatened judgments have nearly reached the climax of horrors. Their very recital makes one's ears tingle! What must the dread reality have been? Verily, the Lord is a God of judgment; and hardened sinners have cause to tremble before Him! H. C.

Chap. 20 is a continuation of chap. 19.

1, 2. Pashur's unjust displeasure against Jeremiah, and the fruits of that displeasure (verses 1, 2). This Pashur was a priest, and therefore, one would think, should have protected Jeremiah, who was of his own order, a priest too; and the more because he was a prophet of the Lord, whose interests the priests, his ministers, ought to consult; but this priest was a persecutor of him whom he should have patronized. H.—This Pashur was not the man who bears the same name in 21: 1—this being the son of Immer; that, the son of Melchiah. This man was head prefect of the Temple, the priest who had the general supervision there. This may have been the first case of personal violence to the prophet. The “stocks” were an instrument contrived not merely to confine the person, but to torture it as well. The original word implies this—a wrench, made to twist and distort the body out of any natural, easy posture. H. C.

Pashur was a *priest* and of high rank in the service of the Temple of Jehovah. Such a man should have been able to recognize a true prophet of Jehovah as his fellow-servant. Yet he was first in persecuting him. Pashur was a responsible *officer of justice*. Such a man should not have allowed himself to be carried away by a flood of popular indignation, influences of class jealousy or impulses of personal spite. Judicial crimes are always the most atrocious crimes. They poison justice at its very fountain, they abuse high trusts, they disorganize society.

Pashur replied to the words of prophecy with the *arm of force*. He could not answer Jeremiah, so he attempted to repress him. Unable to refute the arguments of the prophet, he endeavored to restrain the utterance of them. Here we recognize the folly, the injustice and the cruelty of such persecution: the *folly*, for to silence a voice is not to destroy the unpleasant truth it declares; *injustice*, for nothing can be more unfair than to do violence to a man for uttering words which we cannot deny to be true; and *cruelty*, for it is a man's duty to make known what he believes to be important truths. *Adeney*.

3. After one day's confinement and torture, Pashur brought Jeremiah forth. Undaunted

by this torture, Jeremiah announces to his tormentor a new and terrible word from the Lord for him personally. The name *Pashur* signifies “security round about.” The Lord does not give him that name—certainly not any longer—but “fear round about,” a name significant of his doom—referred to in the following verses. H. C.

We do not find that, when Pashur put Jeremiah in the stocks, the latter gave him any check for what he did; he appears to have quietly and silently submitted to the abuse; when he suffered, he threatened not; but when he brought him out of the stocks, then God put a word into the prophet's mouth which would awaken his conscience if he had any. For when the prophet of the Lord was bound, the word of the Lord was not. What can we think Pashur aimed at in smiting and abusing Jeremiah? Whatever it is, we shall see by what God says to him that he is disappointed. H.

7-18. The remaining verses of this chapter are personal to Jeremiah, recording his own experiences, his prayer and his language addressed to God. In order to judge him fairly, we must bear in mind that, in addition to the unceasing trial of failure in his efforts to reclaim and save the people, in addition also to scorn and reproach from every quarter, he had now spent one day in torture, and came forth only to confront his arch persecutor with another message of terror from the Lord. H. C.—There are many such photographs of the inner heart-life of God's people. It is the touch of nature which brings them near to us. The words and work of Jeremiah become more living and influential when we witness his spiritual struggles. M.

7. The true meaning is, “Thou didst *persuade me*”—i.e., to undertake the prophetic work, quite against my wish and preference, but I yielded; “Thou wert stronger than I, and didst prevail,” for in this struggle I could not decide against Thy will, expressed so clearly and so strongly. Yet he goes on to say, “Although I entered upon this work only under the strong pressure of Thy command, I have been in derision all the time; every one mocks me.” H. C.

O Lord, Thou hast deceived me. The original word here may signify to “persuade” or “allure,” and that by fair, as well as by indirect means. The passage alludes to that encouragement which the prophet received from God, either at his first appointment (chap. 1: 7, 8, 17-19), or afterward, when he began to complain of hardships (chap. 15: 19-21). The

meaning, therefore, of the prophet's words in this place is consistent with the most perfect piety and reverence toward God, who, he says, had prevailed on him to undertake an honorable though painful employment, and had encouraged him to go on with it by assurances which he acknowledges to have been made good (verses 11-13), notwithstanding the unmerited scorn and reproaches of his countrymen had often tempted him to wish that he could withdraw himself out of the way (verses 8, 9). *Blayney.*

Verses 8-11 furnish an effective illustration of the comparative excellence of the Revised Version. The reader can readily make the comparison. B.

9. Then the thought comes up (the temptation, shall we not call it?), "I will prophesy no more; I will not name the Lord to this people again. But the present hand of God upon me—is in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones"—a most vivid account of the intense pressure of his convictions of duty and of his sense of a present God pressing him on in his work. H. C.

Many an earnest ministering spirit has felt like this, overborne by the force of the world's evil, impatient of the slow progress of the kingdom of truth and righteousness. But the prophet cannot so easily throw up his work. God, as at the beginning, is "stronger than he," and holds him firmly in His grasp; holds him to his office and ministry by the force not so much of outward circumstance as of a spiritual persuasion by the strong necessity of an inward law. W.

The risk of unfaithfulness is put beyond Jeremiah's control. He is put between two great "cannots." He cannot bear the reproaches of the people. That on the one hand. But, on the other hand, he finds that he cannot keep unexpressed the message of Jehovah. God takes His Word into His own keeping. The pain of prophesying, great as it was, was less than the pain of withholding the prophecy. It is ever a mark of God's true servants, that in times when there is great need of testimony they cannot keep silent. Better to burn at the stake than to have one's true, inner life burned up in resisting God. Y.

In like manner Paul says of himself, that "necessity was laid upon him, so that woe would be to him if he preached not the Gospel, the dispensation of which was committed unto him" (1 Cor. 9:16, 17). The psalmist makes use of the like expression, "the fire burned," to denote the inward agitation he felt, while he

endeavored to stifle the sentiments which labored for utterance (Ps. 39:3). *Blayney.*

The same experience is felt by all men who have spiritual relations with truth. They do not hold truth; they find that truth holds them. The reason of this is found in the real presence of the Spirit of God. Revelation is by inspiration, and inspiration is the breathing of God's Spirit into a man's spirit, so that he becomes possessed by it. The tremendous importance of the truth revealed increases this compulsion of utterance. Jeremiah had revealed to him no barren, abstract dogmas, no trivial religious notions, no empty answers to curious, prying questions of little practical moment, but terrible truths concerning his people and their highest interests. How could he hide such truths as we have seen he had been entrusted with? If God speaks it must be to utter important words. The burden of them urges their custodian to declare them. *Adeney.*

There is only one source from which the enthusiasm of the Gospel ministry can come, and that is a deep and ever deeper Christian life of our own. Live deeper. Let God do more for you. Be sure that you have not begun to reach the limits of what He can do. Give Him a larger liberty to help you; and then the thought that any man should go unhelped by Him will seem dreadful to you, and you must speak so that men will hear. *Bp. Brooks.*—The preacher's words had power because they accorded with his thoughts, had reality and depth because they harmonized with the life he had always lived. It was not mere breath that this preacher uttered; they were the words of life, because a life of good deeds and holy love was melted into them. Pearls pure and rich had been dissolved into the precious draught. *Hawthorne.*

The Incarnate Son of God bids us disciple all the nations and preach the Gospel to every creature. Shall we not do it? Oh, for the Pentecostal breath and the flaming tongues of fire! Oh, for the vision which Stephen had in the hour of his martyrdom! Oh, for the flaming feet of the Master in all our assemblies, and the passion of His speech, as showing us His pierced side and palms! He says: "All this I suffered for thee; what hast thou done for Me?" That question made Zinzendorf the pioneer of modern missions; that question ringing in our ears will sandal our feet for the world's evangelization. Come again, to each one of us, O Thou Incarnate Son of God, that we may count it our supreme joy to live, and toil, and die for Thee! *Behrends.*

If we have found Christ for ourselves, we shall undoubtedly wish to speak forth our knowledge of His love. Convictions which are deep demand expression. Emotion which is strong needs utterance. If our hearts have any fervor of love to Christ in them, it will be as natural to tell it forth as tears are to sorrow or smiles to happiness. True, there is a reticence in profound feeling, and sometimes the deepest love can only "love and be silent," and there is a just suspicion of loud or vehement protestations of Christian emotion, as of any emotion. But for all that, it remains true that a heart warmed with the love of Christ needs to express its love, and will give it forth, as certainly as light must radiate from its centre or heat from a fire.

The possession of the Gospel imposes the obligation to impart it. All our possessions are trusts, but especially is this the case in regard to our religion. "God hath shined into our hearts" that we may to others "give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." We are bound to impart the Gospel by our common humanity; for the possessions of each are for the good of all. We are bound by loyalty to Jesus Christ, who will have us make plain who is our master. He is a coward who hides his colors. No church commission or sanction is needed. God makes men preachers, in the true sense of the word, by making them Christians; and there can be no more stringency given to the obligation to proclaim Christ than it already possesses, though all the churches were to summon to the work, or the angel that impelled Peter on the road to Cesarea were to lay his hand on our shoulders. The necessity of utterance accompanies all deep convictions about moral or religious matters; and if a Christian man has never felt that God's word is as a fire in his bones, which must have vent, he has need to ask himself whether he is a Christian. God forbid that we should say that such men are not; but, if they are, they certainly are very imperfectly so. A. M.

10. The terribly bitter thing to the heart of this loving prophet was that those who stood in the relations of friendship and protection to him had turned so cruelly against him. H. C.

13. Jeremiah closes his prayer with praise. No sooner has he asked for God's help than he feels so assured of receiving it that he anticipates it in imagination, and breaks forth into grateful song as though he were already enjoying it. This is a proof of genuine faith. Faith makes the absent seem near and the future appear. *Adeney.*

14-18. Divested of its poetical heightening, all that the prophet says amounts only to this: that the man who had brought his father the tidings of his birth had been, in reality, the messenger of ill news instead of good; for that, as things had turned out with him, it would have been a kinder and more charitable office to have strangled him in the womb than to have assisted in bringing him into the world to lead a life of so much bitterness and disquietude. *W. Lowth, Dr. Blayney.*

Jeremiah was making the huge blunder of looking at things entirely from the point of view of his own feelings, and his present feelings. His actions were better than his words. Speaking out of his own feelings, he talked great folly; speaking as the prophet of God, his utterances were those of wisdom and truth. The fact was that of no one belonging to his generation could it be more truly said than of him that his birth was a good thing; good for the nation, good for himself, good for the glory and service of Jehovah. We must not bemoan existence because there is *suffering* in it. Suffering may be very protracted and intense, and yet life be full of blessing. Y.

Jeremiah and Elijah had seasons of being strong in the Lord, and also seasons of being sadly weak in the Lord, or rather weak through not being just then very much *in the Lord*, but rather in the flesh, and under the control of a prostrate nervous system. Elijah one day faces down eight hundred idol prophets, and sees them laid dead at his feet; but the tax on his nervous energy was exhausting, and the next day he fears a single woman, and flies for his life, and even begs that God will take him out of the world. These verses are a sad record of the spirit of Jeremiah; for, after making all the allowance we can for these words of his on the score of Oriental usage, and on the score of their manifest imitation of Job's imprecations upon the day of his birth (Job 3), we cannot bring them into harmony with the sweet spirit of trust in God's love and universal providence, which it is the Christian's privilege and glory to maintain through every possible extreme of earthly trial. * Very probably Jeremiah had it in mind to compare his case tacitly with that of Job, and to say within himself, If Job had occasion to utter such imprecations upon the day of his birth, and upon all the parties who either had or might have had any agency there, fully as much, or more, have I; but this view of the case, though it may suggest the occasion, fails to justify the spirit of such words. H. C.

When grace has got the victory, it is good to remember the struggles of corruption, that we may be ashamed of ourselves and our own folly, may admire the goodness of God in not taking us at our word, and may be warned by it to double our guard upon our spirits another time. See here how strong the temptation was which the prophet, by Divine assistance, got the victory over, and how far he yielded to it, that we may not despair if we through the weakness of the flesh be at any time thus tempted. H.—God lets a true heart dare much in speech ; for He knows that the sputter and foam prove that “the heart’s deeps boil in earnest.” A. M.

Jeremiah was a prophet, a good man, a man of faith, a man of prayer. Yet he cursed the day of his birth. Jeremiah was not without precedents for his conduct. Not to mention Jonah, whose character is by no means exemplary (though, poor man, he may have been good at heart), the patient Job and the courageous Elijah had both regarded existence as a curse, and cried passionately for death. Jeremiah had great provocations to despair. His mission seemed to be a failure ; his old friends had become spies in league with his inveterate foes ; he stood alone, watched, maligned, hated, cruelly misjudged. We cannot be surprised that his patience broke down. Though impatience and a yielding to despair are proofs of weakness, they are far less culpable than unfaithfulness. Many would have quietly declined the tasks which Jeremiah manfully performed, though they led him to the verge of despair. It must be noted that, though the prophet cursed the day of his birth, he did not flee from the mission of his life ; though he longed for death, he did not commit suicide. From his experience the sorrowful may learn that deeper depths of sorrow have been traversed than any they are in, and yet the light has been reached on the farther side ; the desponding may see how good men have been

near despair before them, and so be encouraged by knowing that their despondency is not a sin of fatal unbelief. *Adeney.*

The life of Jeremiah, “the sorrowful prophet,” should encourage us to noble things in spite of the hardest trials and oppositions. Like Job, he drank affliction and hostility to the dregs ; yet what was bitter in his experience turned to sweetness in his character. Like Elijah, he was a man of life passions with ourselves, sensitive to pain, susceptible of temptation, liable to sin ; yet he conquered against tremendous odds by means of the Divine grace open to us all. Moreover, he was a man not without sin. Occasionally, he failed even in his characteristic excellences. Scepticism sometimes touched him with its icy finger (4 : 10). Once he was tempted, like Jonah, to desert his task (1 : 6). Like Job, he was betrayed into cursing the day of his birth (20 : 14–18). Nevertheless his life was, upon the whole, a psalm of heroic nobility. Standing alone amid the crashing foundations of Judah, his character remains erect and enduring. The dirges which came so plaintively from his riven soul have brought pæans of praise to many later sufferers. He triumphed because he believed in God and in every word of God. He endured, like Moses, as seeing him who is invisible. There his faith cast anchor, and the stormy sea was powerless to dislodge it. It made him sure of final safety whatever earthly illusions might vanish, whatever earthly catastrophes might befall. It stationed him at the view point of the Unchangeable and Omniscient, and enabled him to see things as they actually were. This martyr to truth has become the hero of immortal honor, because he trusted in the God who holds the future as well as the present. “The sorrows of Jeremiah, more than those of any other single prophet, correspond to the desertion, the isolation, the tenderness, the death, and the final glorification of the Divine Sufferer.” *McPherson.*

JEREMIAH, CHAPTER XXI.

Embodied with the History, Vol. VII., page 436.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTERS XXII., XXIII.

22 : 1 Thus said the LORD : Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there
 2 this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of
 3 David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates. Thus saith the LORD :
 Execute ye judgement and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppres-
 sor : and do no wrong, do no violence, to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither
 4 shed innocent blood in this place. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the
 gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses,
 5 he, and his servants, and his people. But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself,
 6 saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation. For thus saith the LORD concern-
 ing the house of the king of Judah : Thou art Gilead unto me, *and* the head of Lebanon : *yet*
 7 surely I will make thee a wilderness, *and* cities which are not inhabited. And I will prepare
 destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons : and they shall cut down thy choice
 8 cedars, and cast them into the fire. And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall
 say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this great city ?
 9 Then they shall answer, Because they forsook the covenant of the LORD their God, and wor-
 shipped other gods, and served them.
 10 Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him : but weep sore for him that goeth away ;
 11 for he shall return no more, nor see his native country. For thus saith the LORD touching
 Shallum the son of Josiah, king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which
 12 went forth out of this place : He shall not return thither any more ; but in the place whither
 they have led him captive, there shall he die, and he shall see this land no more.
 13 Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by injustice ;
 14 that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not his hire ; that saith, I
 will build me a wide house and spacious chambers, and cutteth him out windows ; and it is
 15 cieled with cedar, and painted with vermilion. Shalt thou reign, because thou strivest to
 excel in cedar ? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgement and justice ? then it was
 16 well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy ; then it was well. Was not
 17 this to know me ? saith the LORD. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covet-
 18 ousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it. There-
 fore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah : They shall
 not lament for him, *saying*, Ah my brother ! or, Ah sister ! they shall not lament for him,
 19 *saying*, Ah lord ! or, Ah his glory ! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn
 and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.
 20 Go up to Lebanon, and cry ; and lift up thy voice in Bashan : and cry from Abarim ; for
 21 all thy lovers are destroyed. I spake unto thee in thy prosperity ; but thou saidst, I will
 22 not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice. The
 wind shall feed all thy shepherds, and thy lovers shall go into captivity : surely then shalt
 23 thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness. O inhabitant of Lebanon, that
 makest thy nest in the cedars, how greatly to be pitied shalt thou be when pangs come upon
 24 thee, the pain as of a woman in travail ! As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son
 of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee
 25 thence ; and I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of
 them of whom thou art afraid, even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and
 26 into the hand of the Chaldeans. And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee,
 27 into another country, where ye were not born ; and there shall ye die. But to the land
 28 whereunto their soul longeth to return, thither shall they not return. Is this man Coniah a
 despised broken vessel ? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure ? wherefore are they cast out,
 29 he and his seed, and are cast into the land which they know not ? O earth, earth, earth,
 30 hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that
 shall not prosper in his days : for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of
 David, and ruling any more in Judah.

- 23 : 1** Woe unto the shepherds that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture ! saith the
 2 **LORD.** Therefore thus saith the **LORD**, the God of Israel, against the shepherds that feed my
 people : Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them ; be-
 3 hold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the **LORD.** And I will gather the
 remnant of my flock out of all the countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them
 4 again to their folds ; and they shall be fruitful and multiply. And I will set up shepherds
 over them which shall feed them : and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall
 any be lacking, saith the **LORD.**
 5 Behold, the days come, saith the **LORD**, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch,
 and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute judgement and justice in the
 6 land. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely : and this is his name
 7 whereby he shall be called, The **LORD** is our righteousness. Therefore, behold, the days come,
 saith the **LORD**, that they shall no more say, As the **LORD** liveth, which brought up the chil-
 8 dren of Israel out of the land of Egypt ; but, As the **LORD** liveth, which brought up and
 which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all the countries
 whither I had driven them ; and they shall dwell in their own land.
 9 Concerning the prophets. Mine heart within me is broken, all my bones shake ; I am like
 a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome ; because of the **LORD**, and be-
 10 cause of his holy words. For the land is full of adulterers ; for because of swearing the land
 mourneth ; the pastures of the wilderness are dried up ; and their course is evil, and their
 11 force is not right. For both prophet and priest are profane ; yea, in my house have I found
 12 their wickedness, saith the **LORD.** Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery places
 in the darkness : they shall be driven on, and fall therein : for I will bring evil upon them,
 13 even the year of their visitation, saith the **LORD.** And I have seen folly in the prophets of
 14 Samaria ; they prophesied by Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. In the prophets of
 Jerusalem also I have seen an horrible thing ; they commit adultery, and walk in lies, and
 they strengthen the hands of evil-doers, that none doth return from his wickedness : they are
 all of them become unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.
 15 Therefore thus saith the **LORD** of hosts concerning the prophets : Behold, I will feed them
 with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall : for from the prophets of Jerusa-
 16 lem is profaneness gone forth into all the land. Thus saith the **LORD** of hosts, Harken not
 unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you ; they teach you vanity : they speak
 17 a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the **LORD.** They say continually
 unto them that despise me, The **LORD** hath said, Ye shall have peace ; and unto every one
 that walketh in the stubbornness of his own heart they say, No evil shall come upon you.
 18 For who hath stood in the council of the **LORD**, that he should perceive and hear his word ?
 19 who hath marked my word, and heard it ? Behold, the tempest of the **LORD**, *even his* fury,
 20 is gone forth, yea, a whirling tempest : it shall burst upon the head of the wicked. The
 anger of the **LORD** shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the
 21 intents of his heart : in the latter days ye shall understand it perfectly. I sent not these
 22 prophets, yet they ran : I spake not unto them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood
 in my council, then had they caused my people to hear my words, and had turned them from
 23 their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. Am I a God at hand, saith the **LORD**, and
 24 not a God afar off ? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him ? saith the
 25 **LORD.** Do not I fill heaven and earth ? saith the **LORD.** I have heard what the prophets
 26 have said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How
 long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies ; even the prophets of the
 27 deceit of their own heart ? which think to cause my people to forget my name by their
 dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers forgot my name for Baal.
 28 The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream ; and he that hath my word, let him
 29 speak my word faithfully. What is the straw to the wheat ? saith the **LORD.** Is not my
 word like as fire ? saith the **LORD** ; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces ?
 30 Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the **LORD**, that steal my words every
 31 one from his neighbour. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the **LORD**, that use their
 32 tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy lying dreams, saith
 the **LORD**, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their vain boast-
 ing : yet I sent them not, nor commanded them ; neither shall they profit this people at all,

33 saith the LORD. And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the LORD? then shalt thou say unto them, What burden! I will cast you off, saith the LORD. And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house. Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbour, and every one to his brother, What hath the LORD answered? and, What hath the LORD spoken? And the burden of the LORD shall ye mention no more: for every man's own word shall be his burden; for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of hosts our God. Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the LORD answered thee? and, What hath the LORD spoken? But if ye say, The burden of the LORD; therefore thus saith the LORD: Because ye say this word, The burden of the LORD, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the LORD; therefore, behold, I will utterly forget you, and I will cast you off, and the city that I gave unto you and to your fathers, away from my presence: and I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.

CHAPS. 22 and 23 are connected together by similarity of subject. The temporal and spiritual leaders of the people, who are mainly responsible for the national catastrophe, receive their merited castigation. Verses 1-8 of chap. 23, properly speaking, belong to chap. 22; thus we get a well-rounded discourse on the conduct of the kings, with four symmetrical parts or strophes—verses 1-12, 13-19, 20-30 and chap. 23: 1-8. Each begins with a general exhortation or meditation, and continues with a poetical description of the fates, successively, of Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin. The prophecy is concluded, according to the rule of Isaiah, by a Messianic promise. P. C.

The prophecy which follows to chap. 23: 8 was evidently delivered in the reign of Jehoiakim; for it speaks of his immediate predecessor as already gone into captivity, and foretells the death of Jehoiakim himself. It is likewise probable that it followed immediately after what is said in the 19th and 20th chapters to have passed in the Temple precincts; from whence, as from higher ground, the prophet is ordered to "go down to the house of the king of Judah." (Cf. chap. 36: 12.) The beginning of this prophecy is an address to the king of Judah, his servants and people, recommending an inviolable adherence to right and justice, as the only means of establishing a throne, and preventing the ruin of both prince and people (verses 1-9). The captivity of Shallum is declared to be irreversible (verses 10-12). Jehoiakim is severely reprov'd for his tyrannical oppressions, and his miserable end foretold (verses 13-19). His family is threatened with a continuance of the like calamities; the fall and captivity of his son Jeconiah are explicitly set forth, and the perpetual exclusion of his seed from the throne (verses 20-30). The name of Zedekiah is not mentioned for obvious rea-

sons; but he is, no doubt, principally intended in the two verses of chap. 23 under the general character of those evil shepherds, who should be punished for dispersing, instead of feeding, the flock. In the six following verses, with which the prophecy concludes, the people are consoled with gracious promises of future blessings; of their return from captivity, and of happier times under better governors; of the glorious establishment of the Messiah's kingdom; and, it may be, of the subsequent restoration of all the dispersed Israelites to dwell once more in their own land. *Blayney.*

1, 2. As one who must not fear the face of the proudest or most wicked of monarchs on his throne, Jeremiah must go to the king's house and there proclaim this word. There were things in this message that were keenly cutting and humiliating, but they were also fearfully true, and being true, they should be said even though the guilty man who had done them were a king on his throne. It was pertinent to remind this wicked Jehoiakim that he sat on the throne of David, for David was in an important sense the founder of this kingdom.

3. With admirable clearness and point the one supreme purpose of all civil government, and consequently its prime duties and obligations, are here set forth—viz., to execute judgment and righteousness, to secure even-handed justice and equity between man and man; to shield the weak against the strong, and all classes against oppression and wrong. It was for these purposes that God ordained a civil government over His chosen people. These are the ends He aims to secure in His sanction of civil government in all human society. Rulers should be "a terror to evil-doers and a praise to them that do well." In the present case He promises, provided they will rule thus,

to continue the succession of kings on David's throne indefinitely long, and with great prosperity.

5-7. If Jehoiakim and his court will not hear, God dooms them to utter desolation. Nothing could be more solemn than this fearful oath, in which the Lord God swears by Himself: "As truly as I live, I will execute this sentence of remediless doom!" It would be in vain for the king and his princes to say, It cannot be that God will destroy His own Temple and His own city, and let His name be blotted out from among the nations of men. It would be all in vain for them to flatter themselves that they were so identified with the house, the worship, the name and the honor of God on earth, that they could have nothing to fear from a foreign enemy, no such thing to fear as the ruin of their city and kingdom. H. C.

6. *Thou art Gilead unto Me, and the head of Lebanon.* Lebanon was the highest mountain in Israel; and was, therefore, an apt emblem of the reigning family, advanced to the highest rank and dignity in the State. Gilead was the richest and most fertile part of the country. The meaning then is plainly this, By My providence thou art not only supreme in rank, but hast been rendered exceedingly wealthy and flourishing; but the same power that raised thee, will likewise be exerted in reducing thee to the lowest state of indigence and distress. *Blayney.*—The greater privileges any church or nation enjoys, the sorer will prove its punishment, if it abuses the favor and goodness of God. *Wogan.*

8. *And many nations shall pass by this city.* They who had heard that this city had been called the city of God, and the place of His especial residence, would be astonished to find it the scene of His judgments and vengeance. Thus was fulfilled that threatening of Moses, that God would make the Jews "an astonishment" to other nations (De. 28:37. See likewise 1 K. 9:8.) *W. Lowth.*

10. *Weep ye not for the dead.* "Weep not for the dead"—that is, for the good Josiah, who, though dead, was happy and in peace; but weep rather for his wicked son Shallum, or Jehoahaz, who after a very short and impious reign was carried captive into Egypt, and was never to return or see his native country any more. *Wogan.*

13-17. This woe does not begin with naming Jehoiakim, the king then on the throne. The prophet first describes him in points too plain to be mistaken. He then addresses him

(verse 15), and finally (verse 18) gives his name and God's solemn message to him announcing his terrible doom. The repeated exhortations to Jehoiakim to do justice, to execute judgment, to abstain from oppression (see above, verses 3, 4 and chap. 7:5-9), plainly intimate the general character of his reign in these respects. The history gives us a hint of this in its brief notice of his heavy exactions of tribute from the people (2 K. 23:33, 35). The prophet represents him as lavishing the wealth of the nation upon his palace at this very time when his people were crushed with taxation—extorting labor from them without wages, and building his house by unrighteousness. This was both mean and wicked, and we instinctively honor the Lord for frowning upon it and dooming this proud tyrant to a dishonored grave as a fit retribution for building his costly and magnificent palace with coerced, unpaid labor, in the midst of the general suffering of an overtaxed people. In verse 15 the Hebrew reads, not precisely "closest thyself in cedar," but "dost rival or emulate in cedar"—*i.e.*, rival all other kings; seek to outdo them all in the costliness and splendor of thy palace. Will this guarantee to thee a long and prosperous reign? Far otherwise. "Did not thy father eat and drink," enjoying the good things of life quite sufficiently, and yet without any such extortion and wasteful expenditure as this of thine? Did not he do justice and judgment, and thus ensure prosperity? Do not you, his recreant son, know that he judged the cause of the poor and needy, and that so judging and so doing it was well with him? And is not this administration of justice—done withal in kindness and compassion—"to know Me, saith the Lord?" Is anything else *knowing Me*? Will not every king who really knows Me rule thus?

18, 19. Note the striking contrast between the great mourning over the death of the father, Josiah, and the utter absence of even one note of grief over the burial of his godless, graceless, guilty son! Nobody shall say over him, "Ah his glory!" There was no glory lost there to be deplored!

Verses 20-30 refer to Jeconiah, otherwise called Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim. In the first four verses he is not brought out by name (Jehoiakim was not at first; see verses 13-17), but the manner in which he is introduced in verse 24 shows that these four verses (20-23) refer to him. Indeed, they can refer to none other, for Jehoiakim has gone to his dishonored grave. The Lord had spoken to this young

king in friendly warning while he was prosperous, but he would not hear. Indeed, from his youth he had persisted in this wicked course, regardless of the voice of God. Of necessity this must ensure his ruin. H. C.

20. *Go up to Lebanon, and cry.* This is an ironical expression, addressed to Jerusalem, or more probably to the royal house or family of Judah; the whole chapter being a prophecy concerning it and its several branches. She is styled "inhabitant of Lebanon" (verse 23) for the same reason as her state and dignity is denoted by "the head (or summit) of Lebanon" (verse 6), as being highest of all. Here she is called upon ironically to go to the tops of the highest mountains, and to the frontiers of the country, and cry aloud for help to the neighboring powers, but in vain; since all those who had any inclination to favor her, the Egyptians in particular, were themselves crushed and disabled by the arms of the king of Babylon. *Blayney.*

21. *I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear.* God speaks to us in our prosperity. There are important words which need to be spoken to us at such a time. We can never have all the *wants* of our souls supplied by the richest abundance of material good things, and we need heavenly words for our soul's sustenance then as much as in the conscious helplessness of trouble. We have special *duties* belonging to the time of prosperity. Prosperity brings talents, opens up opportunities for enlarged service, calls for renewed devotion of love and gratitude. There are also peculiar *dangers* attending prosperity, and it is well that we should hear a Divine voice warn us against them, and heed a Divine counsel which will direct us how to conquer them. There are *means* by which God speaks to us in prosperity. He is ever speaking to us, even when we do not hear His voice—by the Bible we should be reading, by the ordinances of the Church and the institution of preaching, by the course of providence, by the life of nature, by the still small voice of conscience. But there are special voices of prosperity. Prosperity speaks to us of the goodness of God exercised toward us in spite of our ill-desert and in a degree beyond all reckoning.

There is danger lest we should disregard the voice of God in prosperity. God does not thrust His messages upon unwilling ears. We may refuse to hear. Yet He speaks so that we may always hear, so that if we do not heed His voice it must be because we will not hearken to it. Prosperity may disincite us to do this

because it *seems* to satisfy us without God. Really satisfy us it cannot. But temporarily it acts as an opiate, and when we do not feel the need of God we are tempted selfishly to disregard His voice. Then prosperity is *disfracting*. Sorrow is lonely and silent, and leaves us in the dark night to listen to heavenly voices and gaze on the wonders of the world above. The garish day of prosperity, with its noisy and dazzling distractions, withdraws our attention from such things. Further, prosperity *begets pride*. It leads us to think much of self, to yield to self-will, and to rebel against the requirement to act as God's servants and stoop beneath the yoke of His will. Hence it inclines us to a rebellious disregard for His voice. If men have been hardened against God from their *youth*, it is not likely that they will heed His voice in the time of prosperity. The longer we neglect this voice the more deaf do we become to it. It is terrible to think of the folly and wickedness of persistent disregard to God's truth while He is patient and long-suffering and persevering in seeking access to our hearts. Some great shock seems to be required to disturb this habit of hardened indifference. An earthquake of adversity may be required to break up such fallow ground. If trouble comes with this end it is a great blessing. The adversity of the Captivity was such a blessing to the Jews; it led them to regard the voice that was unheeded in their prosperity. So our sorrows are often blessings if they make us to hear the voice of our Father in heaven. *Adeney.*

Prosperity is as real a test of what men are as is adversity. It draws forth a different set of qualities, but is not the less a means of proving and intensifying a man's character, be it good or bad. When we say that sometimes success in commerce, literature, science or military skill makes a man vain and scornful of others, or humble and considerate, we really mean that it has developed hidden weakness in the one case, and moral strength in the other. He who can conquer prosperity is often a greater man than the conqueror of adversity. Only the spirit of Him who "made Himself of no reputation," who "became poor" that we "might be rich," will enable us to subdue *all things* to His glory. *Chapman.*

24, 25. The signet-ring on the right hand would represent whatever was peculiarly valuable and precious. Though Coniah was in some respects as valuable and dear to the Lord as a signet ring, yet for his sins the Lord would pluck him off His finger—*i.e.*, hurl him from his throne, and send him into captivity. The

history of this young but wicked king shows that he was taken captive to Babylon; that he lay there at least thirty-seven years in captivity; was then brought forth from prison on the accession of Evil-merodach, and treated with princely kindness. This Chaldean king reigned but two years. We hear no more of Jehoiachin. (See 2 K. 25 : 27-30 and Jer. 52 : 31-34.) Ezekiel, a fellow-captive, dates from the years of his captivity. (See Ezek. 1 : 2 ; 8 : 1, etc.)

30. This young king was doomed to be childless, not in the sense of having no offspring, but of having none to succeed him on the throne of David and to rule any more in Judah. That he had sons appears in 1 Chron. 3 : 17, 18 and in Matt. 1 : 12. In him the royal line became extinct—a fact pregnant with significance in this connection, opening the way for the subject of the next chapter, the new king whom God would raise up for a shepherd to His people (23 : 5, 6). H. C.

Chap. 23. This chapter stands in the closest relations of thought to the preceding. The succession of wicked kings, the three recreant sons of Josiah, brought to view, delineated and doomed there, are here referred to as “the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep on the Lord’s pasture-field.” They are doomed to fearful judgments; but the Lord in His loving faithfulness will yet save His people, and for this end will raise up a righteous King in the person of the Messiah, under whose just sway the people will have salvation, instead of such judgments as their wicked kings had brought down upon them. This is the course of thought which introduces and illustrates this signal prophecy of the Messiah (verses 5, 6) and of His blessed reign (verses 7, 8). The remaining portion of the chapter (verses 9-40) treats of the false prophets whose influence had been and then was so pernicious to the people.

1. That the word “pastors” is applied to the kings that sat on David’s throne comes naturally from the fact that David himself was taken from the care of his father’s flocks and put to the care of the Lord’s people. He was in more senses than one the *shepherd-king*—i.e., a king who rose from shepherd-life to the life of king, and who made that kingly life a fine example of pastoral care and influence over the Lord’s covenant people. In the light of his example suggested by this very term, it was most fit that the direst woes should fall on those recreant kings recently named and described, who had destroyed or scattered into foreign lands the sheep who were on the Lord’s pasture-land in Canaan. The main thoughts

in this passage (verses 1-8) are found even more fully expanded in Ezek. 34.

2. “The Lord God of Israel” is the appropriate designation of Jehovah in such a connection as this. He appears here in glorious promise and prophecy as the deliverer of His people, because He is by covenant the Lord God of Israel—of Israel as a whole people, irrespective of the revolt and loss of the Ten Tribes—of Israel as the offspring of Him who was a prince with God.

5. “Branch” is rather a *shoot* or sprout which springs up from the root and becomes itself the tree. The word appears earliest in Isa. 4 : 2, and is said of the Messiah elsewhere—e.g., Jer. 33 : 15 ; Zech. 3 : 8 and 6 : 12. He would be *righteous* in broad distinction from the unrighteous kings brought to view in the previous chapter, especially Jehoiakim, who was unsurpassed in shameless injustice and oppression. (The same word is used of the Messiah in Isa. 53 : 11 and Zech. 9 : 9.) H. C.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord. It hath been universally agreed by Christians, and allowed by several of the most eminent Jewish interpreters, that this is a prophecy of the coming of Christ, and the glorious state of God’s Church consequent thereupon. Nor is it possible to think of any other person or event, to which the characters here mentioned agree; while they all evidently conspire to point out the Messiah and His kingdom.

I will raise unto David a righteous Branch. It is an usual figure for the head of a family, and the descendants from him, to be represented by the root or body of a tree, and the branches growing out of that tree. God, therefore, having frequently declared that the Messiah should be born of the house and lineage of David, the prophet, here and in chap. 33 : 15, with allusion to this figure, mentions it as an act of Divine power and mercy that “God would raise unto David a righteous Branch.” *Dean Stanhope.*

The Messiah is often called “the Branch,” to denote His descent from the stock of David. (See Isa. 4 : 2 ; Zech. 3 : 8 ; 6 : 12, and cf. Isa. 11 : 1.) *W. Lowth.*—*And a King shall reign and deal wisely.* The Messiah was continually from the time of David foretold under this character, and as such He was expected by the Jews. Accordingly the New Testament abounds in affirmations concerning the regal character of Jesus; in conformity with which, though His kingly authority be not so visibly and powerfully exerted as it shall one day be, yet we are not left under any reasonable doubt

whether our blessed Lord be the promised Messiah. The amazing vengeance taken on His murderers, in destroying their city and their constitution, and the no less wonderful success of His Gospel, propagated and preserved in opposition to all its enemies, are instances of His unlimited "power in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28 : 18). The enlightening of Jews and Gentiles, by bringing such multitudes of the one and so many nations of the other to the acknowledgment of the truth, are a partial completion of the prophecies, though there be still a nobler in reserve, when the fulness of both shall come in. He reigns now actually in the hearts of men, and subdues the most formidable of our enemies by the holiness of His law and the mighty operations of His grace. His dominion and conquest indeed will be much more absolute when the time shall come for every enemy to be utterly destroyed. In the mean time, we may be well assured that what remains shall certainly come to pass, because nothing has hitherto failed of what was seasonable and expedient to be done, as an evidence of Christ's regal authority. *Dean Stanhope.*

And shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. This character is elsewhere given of the kingdom of Christ (see Ps. 72 : 2 ; Isa. 11 : 5 ; 32 : 1), His laws being the most perfect rule of righteousness, and He Himself the most impartial Rewarder of every man according to his works (Rev. 22 : 12). *W. Lenth.*

6. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Judah and Israel must here be thought of as representing the true Israel of God according to Gal. 6 : 16 : "Peace be upon them, even upon the Israel of God." This means the Messiah's kingdom as enlarged by the accession of the Gentiles, and lifted to a higher plane of spiritual life by the fuller revelation of God through His Incarnate Son, and by the mission of His Spirit. In its terms, and indeed in its spirit as well, this promise ("In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely") refers to that most sublime description of Jehovah's care for His people, seen in De. 33 : 26-29 : "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heavens in thy help, and in His excellency on the sky." "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, 'Destroy

them.' " *Israel then shall dwell in safety alone.*" . . . "Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord"—"the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thine excellency!" So blessed shall be the future reign of our great King Messiah, when His Gospel shall have unbounded sway, and His love shall rule in all hearts without a rival, and unto the real holiness in heart and life of His whole people! Then Zion's King shall bear this name, the Lord our Righteousness. In determining its significance, it is manifest that we ought to be governed by the general course of thought which obtains throughout the passage. And further, we are bound to give it a sense which will not conflict with that which we must give to precisely the same name, "the Lord our Righteousness," when we find it applied (33 : 16) to the Lord's people—to Jerusalem as the mother of us all. Guided by these principles, we must reject the interpretation which finds in this word "righteousness" the idea of Christ's perfect obedience and merit, as constituting a fund or stock which is transferred to His people, and becomes theirs by substitution—*i.e.*, by being accounted theirs irrespective of their own personal righteousness of heart and life. This idea need not come under special discussion here, farther than to say that it has no sympathy with the context; is altogether foreign from the course of thought in this passage; can by no means be taken as the sense of the same phrase in chap. 33 : 16; and therefore cannot be found here without violence and caprice. For the same reasons we must reject the analogous construction which finds in this word "righteousness," as applied here to the Messiah, the idea of justification in the sense of the forgiveness of sin, by which sinners become right before the Divine law. This doctrine is amply taught in the New Testament; but the fact of its being true, and taught there, does not prove that it is taught here. The course of thought here holds us to the idea of a just and righteous regal administration, in the strongest contrast with the cruelly unjust reign of the last Jewish kings on David's throne. It looks also to the resulting peace, prosperity and salvation under King Messiah, which stand over against the resulting wickedness and national ruin which came upon the nation through those wicked kings. *H. C.*

"Jehovah is our Righteousness," says the prophet, using a pregnant Hebrew idiom, expressing that He is the ground and source and guarantee of our righteousness. Interpreting

his words in the light of the future, and translating them into Christian phraseology, we may say that they teach us to look to God as the source of our righteousness through Christ. *Driver.*

"The Lord is our Righteousness," be it the title of Prince or people, is sufficiently significant to explain its own essential meaning. There would be a transfer of the righteous character of the Ruler to be ruled; their spirit and aims would be identical with His; and He would embody their ideal life and present it to God. Through Him the Divine righteousness would be the possession of the least saint. This evidently could only be perfectly accomplished in Christ. Nothing less than a unity of spirit and life with Jesus Christ, through faith, could achieve such a result. *M.*

Christ secures redemption for us by His life-work and His sacrificial death, and with this comes righteousness. Christ is the incarnation of the Divine righteousness, and breathes that into us by His vital contact with His people. Christ rules in righteousness over a people whom He teaches to follow and obey Him with righteousness. *Adeney.*—God counts us as righteous, not alone because Christ is our Representative, but because He will restore our souls. He will make us righteous in ourselves as well as before God. And He does this by setting before us in His own life the perfect example, and attracting us thereto by an ever-increasing attraction; and by imparting to us His own Spirit, who nourishes us in all goodness; and by bringing to bear upon us the mightiest motives which can ever control or influence the human heart—love, gratitude, holy fear, bright, blessed hope—all these and yet others; so day by day does He strengthen and confirm the good will which, when we first came to Him, He gave us as His first gift. Thus does He make those righteous whom God for His sake now counts to be so. *C.*

One day, as I was passing into the field, and that too with some dashes on my conscience, fearing lest yet all was not right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul: "Thy righteousness is in heaven;" and methought withal I saw with the eyes of my soul Jesus Christ at God's right hand—there, I say, as my righteousness; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, God could not say to me, He wanted my righteousness, for that was just before Him. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my

righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, "the same yesterday, to-day and forever." *Bunyan.*

How His Righteousness Becomes Ours. 1. *As the ground of our forgiveness.* Faith in Him as our righteous "Advocate with the Father" delivers us from condemnation. We believe in no "transference of a moral quality." As a man's sins are his own and not another's, so whatever of virtue there may be in him belongs to himself alone. But is it incredible that God should deal with sinful men in the way of mercy because of the perfect righteousness of "the man Christ Jesus"? "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). There is an instinctive witness in our souls to the fact that if "grace reigns" toward us it must be "through righteousness." This is God's answer to that instinct: "By the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Rom. 5:18). 2. *As the inspiring cause of our personal sanctification.* The Gospel is God's method of making men righteous, not a scheme by virtue of which He reckons them to be so when they are not. Faith in Christ's mediatorial work as the ground of forgiveness draws the soul irresistibly into living sympathy with Himself. It is impossible to dwell in fellowship with Him without sharing His spirit and becoming "righteous even as He is righteous." Not more surely does the prepared surface receive the picture the sun's rays paint upon it than does the reverent, trustful, loving soul reflect His image. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass," etc. (2 Cor. 3:18). Thus does His righteousness become ours. 3. *As the rectifying power in the general life of the world.* "A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of His kingdom," and wherever He reigns the discords of the world are resolved into a blessed harmony. He is the Creator of "the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." *W.*

The "righteousness" of Christ is "imputed" to us, in this sense—that, in the abundance of His mercy, we are to be *treated* as if we were righteous as Jesus Christ. Let there be no reserve in our faith in this matter. Let no fear nor shame prevent us from rising to the "height of this great argument." If this were language written or spoken by man, in the exultations of excited hope, we might be incredulous as to its truth; but the mouth of the Lord first uttered it, and the pen of the Holy Ghost first recorded it. The righteous-

ness of God! the righteousness of our Redeemer! We to be regarded and treated as if this righteousness were our personal quality and property—as if we were holy as God Himself—Holy as His spotless Son! The magnanimity of God is nothing less than this. When He describes the method of His forgiveness, it is with an affluence of promise such as compares only with His own infinity. Not only does He forgive, but forgives freely. He forgives, and remembers not. He forgives, and blots out iniquity. He forgives even to the uttermost. He forgives exceeding abundantly, above all we can ask or think. We read not only of redemption, but of *plenteous* redemption; not only of mercy, but of *tender* mercy; not only of kindness, but of *loving* kindness; and these repeated and multiplied beyond plural forms, into the “multitude of His loving-kindnesses.” To read of grace sufficient for us, grace from the throne, were enough; but this is amplified into “abundant” grace, “exceeding abundant,” “superabundant,” grace “immense,” grace “manifold,” the “riches of His grace,” the “exceeding riches of His grace,” the “riches of the glory of His grace.” It would seem that, on that point, where fallen humanity needed “strong consolation,” all the fulness of God were poured into the very language which assures us of the entire oblivion to which sins “that are *past*” shall be consigned, and the entire rectification of the fallen in reference to judicial and retributive notice. *W. Adams.*

7, 8. The sentiment here must be that this deliverance and the consequent blessedness of it will surpass and eclipse the exodus from Egyptian bondage, and hence this will take the place of that as a standing witness and illustration of God’s redeeming power and mercy. That they should be thought of as coming back from the north country to their own land is the natural result of the antithesis between the fruits of those last wicked reigns of the kings of Judah, and of this one all-righteous, wise and prosperous reign of King Messiah. This must needs undo the evils of that; this must restore Zion from the ruin produced by those wicked kings. The wickedness of those vile kings caused the captivity; the righteousness of this good King Messiah must cause the corresponding restoration from captivity. The force of this antithesis naturally determines the form of the expression here; and yet we should greatly err if we were to assume that the Messiah’s work consisted in precisely the literal undoing of those evils—*i.e.*, in restoring Judah from her captivity, and in little or nothing else.

This mode of interpretation would teach that the main if not the only work of the Messiah would be to restore the Jews to Palestine and to re-establish Judaism forever. Paul held an entirely different view of Christ’s great mission. The New Testament teaches the very opposite of this. *H. C.*

The deliverance of Israel after the flesh is infinitely surpassed by the rescue of Israel after the Spirit from a tyranny and bondage with which the Egyptian is not worthy of being named. And the remembrance of the former is in great measure swallowed up and defaced by the abolition of those ceremonial rites and festivals; in the place of which have succeeded the two Christian sacraments, and our seasons of public thanksgiving, as commemorations and perpetual monuments of this latter and better redemption. *Dean Stanhope.*

9-32. The following head of prophecy, though probably delivered at the same time with the foregoing one, treats of a subject entirely different. Jeremiah testifies the horror he felt within him on contemplating the wickedness of the priests and prophets of Judah, and the vengeance which God was about to execute upon them for the corruption which had been diffused through the whole land, by the influence of their evil doctrines and example (verses 9-15). He exhorts the people, in the name of God, not to listen to the words of the prophets, who prophesied of peace when evil was determined, and would infallibly take place, as would in time appear; and charges those prophets with speaking of themselves, and not from the Divine commission (verses 16-22). God asserts His omnipresence and omniscience, and reproveth the audaciousness of the false prophets, who affected to place their own idle dreams on a level with the all-powerful and efficacious word of Divine revelation, declaring Himself against the several species of those impostors (verses 23-32). In fine, He requireth all sorts of persons to desist from an indecency in common use, of styling His word “a burden;” and threatens severely to punish those who, in defiance of this command, should continue to cast such a slur upon it. *Blayney.*

11. “Profane” in the strong sense of impious, reckless of the fear and honor of God. It was horrible that both prophet and priest, the orders who chiefly bore the religious responsibilities of the nation, to whom men looked for pious example and instruction, were utterly lost to all sense of their duty, and were deeply apostate from God. “Yea, in My house” (the Temple) “have I found altars for Baal,” which

is the thing referred to here. (See 2 K. 21 : 5 ; 23 : 12 ; Ezek. 8 : 3, 9, 10, etc.)

13, 14. The noticeable thing in these verses is the stronger shading of odiousness and of guilt in the prophets of Jerusalem than in the prophets of Samaria. The reason of this discrimination against the prophets of Jerusalem obviously is, that they sinned against far greater light than their brethren of Samaria. They had the house and the worship of God in the midst of them, and the Lord's true prophets had often borne their testimony there.

16, 17. Most fitly the Lord exhorts the people to give no heed to their words. So it is always ineffably perilous to listen to men who profess to speak truly for God, yet in fact speak only the visions of their own heart. Men sometimes pervert the Bible so that it no longer utters (in their construction of it) the true voice of God, but seems to endorse their own lies. So doing they wield a terrible power for evil. They assume a fearful responsibility before God. H. C.

We should seek to strengthen the hands of all who want to be good. They are so often weak in action. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." They are hindered by strong temptations which come in their way, when they are striving to get nearer God's ideal for them. They are in need of sympathy. They have to be helped in reaching encouraging views of Divine truth. They need to be remembered in prayer, and generally to have more heart and spirit put into them ; then, having abundant life within, they will not lack force, steadiness and persistency of hand. If we are actively engaged in strengthening the hands of the good, we are to this extent weakening the hands of the evil. And finally, it is very consoling to recollect that when those who profess to be good are found strengthening the hands of evil-doers, this is precisely the time when God's indignation is aroused and His opposition most effective. "If God be for us, who can be against us ?" Y.

18. In the matter of the false and the true prophets, nothing could be more important than to draw the line between them definitely and distinctly, giving the marks and tests whereby each class may be known. Hence the Lord gives these tests here. In the first clause the sense is, one who has been in close and intimate communion with God, who has listened carefully and affectionately to His words, and who has enjoyed precious manifestations of His love. The further description in our text should be carefully noted : "One who has seen

and heard His words ;" and in the parallel clause, "Who is he that has bent his mind in closest attention to the word of the Lord, and so has truly heard it ?" These are the men who may be relied on to speak the word of God truly and honestly. A thoroughly docile and humble spirit, a heart in deep sympathy with God, a supreme regard for His will, and for His revealed word as its reliable manifestation to men—these are decisive tests by which the true prophet may be distinguished from the false in every age. H. C.

20. They will not consider now, But in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly, consider it with understanding (so the word is), or with consideration. Those that will not fear the threatenings shall feel the execution of them, and will then perfectly understand what they will not now admit the evidence of, what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of a just and jealous God. They that will not consider in time will be made to consider when it is too late. Son, remember. H.

How many times did God by His messengers here call upon them. And yet these men would never be brought to consider. But in the latter days, saith the Lord, they shall perfectly consider it, when God hath arrested them and judgment is passed upon them, then they cannot choose but consider it, whether they will or no. Now they have no leisure to consider, nor any room in their memories for the things of another life. Ah ! but then they shall have leisure enough, they shall be where they shall have nothing else to do but consider it ; their memories shall have no other employment to hinder them ; it shall even be engraven upon the tables of their hearts. God would have the doctrine of their eternal state to have been written on the posts of their doors, on their houses, on their hands, and on their hearts ; He would have had them mind it and mention it, as they rise and lie down, and as they walk abroad, that so it might have gone well with them at their latter end. And seeing they rejected this counsel of the Lord, therefore shall it be written always before them in the place of their thralldom, that which way soever they look they may still behold it. *Richard Baxter.*

"Son, remember !" It is the voice, the first voice, the perpetual voice, which meets every man when he steps across the threshold of earth into the presence chamber of eternity. All the future is so built upon and interwoven with the past, that for the saved and for the lost alike this word might almost be taken as the

motto of their whole situation, as the explanation of their whole condition. Memory in another world is indispensable to the gladness of the glad, and strikes the deepest note in the sadness of the lost. We believe that what a man is in this life, he is more in another, that tendencies here become results yonder, that his sin, that his falsehood, that his whole moral nature, be it good or bad, becomes there what it is only striving to be here. We believe that in this present life our capacities of all sorts are hedged in, thwarted, damped down, diluted, by the necessity which there is for their working through this material body of ours. We believe that death is the heightening of a man's stature—if he be bad, the intensifying of his badness; if he be good, the strengthening of his goodness. We believe that the contents of the intellectual nature, the capacities of that nature also, are all increased by the fact of having done with earth and having left the body behind. It is the teaching of common sense and it is the teaching of the Bible. True, that for some, that growth will only be a growth into greater power of feeling greater sorrow. Such an one grows up into a Hercules; but it is only that the Nessus shirt may wrap round him more tightly, and may gnaw him with a fiercer agony. But whether saved or lost—he that dies is greater than when yet living; and all his powers are intensified and strengthened by that awful experience of death and by what it brings with it. We forget *nothing*, in the sense of not being able, some time or another, to recall it; we forget *much* in the sense of ceasing for a time to have it in our thoughts. The fragmentary remembrances which we have now lift themselves above the ocean of forgetfulness like islands in some archipelago, the summits of sister hills though separated by the estranging sea that covers their converging sides and the valleys where their roots unite. The solid land is there, though hidden. Drain off the sea, and there will be no more isolated peaks, but continuous land. In this life we have but the island memories heaving themselves into sight, but in the next "the Lord" shall "cause the sea to go back" by the breath of His mouth, and the channels of the great deep of a human heart's experiences and actions shall be laid bare. "There shall be no more sea;" but the solid land of a whole life will appear when God says, "Son, remember!" A. M.

I was once told, by a near relative of mine, that having in her childhood fallen into a river, and being on the very verge of death but for

the critical assistance which reached her, she saw in a moment her whole life, in its minutest incidents, arrayed before her simultaneously as in a mirror, and she had a faculty developed as suddenly for comprehending the whole and every part. This, from some opium experiences of mine, I can believe. I have indeed seen the same thing asserted twice in modern books, and accompanied by a remark which I am convinced is true—viz., that the dread book of account which the Scriptures speak of is in fact the mind itself of each individual. Of this at least I feel assured, that there is no such thing as *forgetting* possible to the mind. A thousand accidents may and will interpose a veil between our present consciousness and the secret inscriptions on the mind—accidents of the same sort will also rend away the veil; but alike whether veiled or unveiled the inscription remains forever, just as the stars seem to withdraw before the common light of day, whereas, in fact, we all know that it is the light which is drawn over them as a veil, and that they are waiting to be revealed when the obscuring daylight shall have withdrawn. *De Quincy.*

History is as the world's memory; and memory itself is a perpetual witness of immortality. Memory seems to be, as it were, our witness against time, our witness that we are independent of time, our witness that we have a greater being than one which depends on duration. "The soul of man," as a powerful writer says, "grasping and gathering together a long series of duration into itself, makes an essay to free itself from the rigid laws of it, and to purchase to itself the freedom of a true eternity." Memory lives in the past, as well as in the present. It throws itself into it with the vivid consciousness of its reality. It does not acknowledge the past to be gone, and done, and done away, as something only to be matter for reflection or ground of retribution, but as a still living and being reality, which the soul by its inherent immortal powers comprises as it were at a glance, never loses, and can, but for bodily imperfection, recall and render present at will.

This is the case with our own personal memories. Our life is indeed a series of successive acts, and a gradual growing; and there are changes, and gains and losses, and progressions and retrogressions in it, in all its duration. But in memory, the witness of immortality, they all live together. The whole is one picture; presented to the eye of memory, in some sort, as to the eye of God, presented as it were upon one plane—ourselves seen all at

once—no question then of successive personal identity—ourselves in all our history. *Bp. Moberly.*

The memory of all present events will abide with the soul, saved or lost, in the future state. In this life we find ample evidence that nothing is absolutely forgotten, that all thoughts and feelings once cherished by the mind are graven indelibly upon it, and therefore susceptible of recall. The mind is so constructed as to secure their return by the operation of certain fixed laws of suggestion and association, which operate irresistibly, entirely apart from the mind's own volition. By their operation it is possible that all things ever thought or felt, said or done, may be recalled and grouped together as a chain, so that taking hold of any link memory may flash backward and forward, and bring up with the vividness of a present reality every event of the past. Nor is there the least evidence that death will break or detach a single link from the chain. Facts are abundant in proof that the nearer the living approach to death the more effective, full and vivid does memory become. The very weakness and decay of the body seem to intensify and quicken it with new life. And inspiration declares that the deeds of men in the body, the evil as well as the good, shall follow them. It affirms that upon each guilty soul will be held a strict inquisition of its every word and act, that *its own* testimony concerning each shall determine the final award. "Son, remember" is the thrillingly conclusive expression which the Divine Teacher, He who was Truth itself, applies to the rich man in the very experience of torment. Assuredly, then, memory and reflection shall immovably abide with the unforgiven soul, perfect, unclouded memory and clear, unbroken reflection upon the long-wasted past, upon its minutest particulars of neglected duty, privilege and opportunity. And thus it shall be that in the self-revelation of the eternal world, by the inconceivable quickening and expanded power of memory and reflection, conscience shall be compelled to the undying remorse of a perpetuated self-revelation and confession. B.

Memory is not all within the power of the will on earth; and probably, memory in another world is still more involuntary and still more constant. Why? Because I read in the Bible that there is *work* in another world for God's servants to do; but I do not read that there is work for anybody else but God's servants to do. The work of an unforgiven sinner is done when he dies. And that not only

because he is going into the state of retribution, but because no rebel's work is going to be suffered in that world. The time for that is past. And so, if you will look, all the teachings of the Bible about the future state of those that are not in blessedness give us this idea—a monotonous continuance of idleness, shutting them up to their own contemplations, the memories of the past and the agonies of the future. There are no distractions for such a man in another world. He has thought, he has conscience, he has remembrance. He has a sense of pain, of sin, of wrong, of loss. He has one "passive, fixed endurance, all eternal and the same;" but I do not read that his pain is undyned and his sorrow soothed by any activity that his hand finds to do. And in a most tragic sense, we may say, "there is neither work, nor labor, nor device" in that dark world where the fruits of sin are reaped in monotonous suffering and ever-present pain. A memory that *will* have its own way; what a field for sorrow and lamentation that is, when God says at last, "Now go—go apart; take thy life with thee; read it over; see what thou hast done with it!" One old Roman tyrant had a punishment in which he bound the dead body of the murdered to the living body of the murderer, and left them there scaffolded. And when that voice comes, "Son, remember!" to the living soul of the godless, unbelieving, impenitent man, there is bound to him the murdered past, the dead past, his own life; and in Milton's awful and profound words,

"Which way I fly is hell—myself am hell!"

There is enough—without any ghastly, sensual external figures—*there* is enough to make the boldest tremble; a memory embracing all the past, a memory rapidly grasping and constantly bringing its burdens, a judgment which admits of no mistakes, and a conscience which has done with palliations and excuses!

It is not difficult to see how that is an instrument of torture. It is more difficult to see how such a memory can be a source of gladness; and yet it can. The old Greeks were pressed with that difficulty; they said to themselves, If a man remembers, there can be no Elysium for him. And so they put the river of forgetfulness, the waters of Lethe, betwixt life and the happy plains. Ah, *we* do not want any river of oblivion betwixt us and everlasting blessedness. Calvary is on this side, and that is enough! Certainly it is one of the most blessed things about "the faith that is in Christ Jesus," that it makes a man remember his own

sinfulness with penitence, not with pain—that it makes the memory of past transgressions full of solemn joy, because the memory of *past* transgressions but brings to mind the depth and rushing fulness of that river of love which has swept them all away as far as the east is from the west. A. M.

23, 24. The special bearing of these interrogations is upon the case of those false prophets. Do they think, saith the Lord, that I do not know their hearts? Do they flatter themselves that I am too far off to see and to know them? or that they can hide in secret places so as to escape the searching glance of My eye? In these sublime strains the Lord asserts His omniscience and omnipresence. Himself everywhere, His eye looking through all hearts—how vain for the wicked to dream that they can think a thought God will not know, or frame a device that His eye will not pierce through, or do a foul deed which He will not surely see and terribly disclose before the universe? H. C.

Two attributes—omnipresence and omniscience—are asserted. But they are so mutually dependent and so inseparable as to be virtually one. By the very necessity of His Being as the infinite Spirit, God is not more in one place or sphere of existence than another, but alike in all, “afar off” as well as “at hand,” filling heaven and earth; and wherever He is, there He is in all the fulness of His perfect intelligence, not observant or cognizant of some things or beings more than others, but having infallible knowledge of all. W.

Do not I fill heaven and earth?

One of the most striking features of what we call nature is its vastness. Think of plains stretching to the horizon; of mountains piercing the clouds; of roomy continents anchored in roomier oceans; of this whole earth-sphere, with its huge baldric of twenty-five thousand miles, covered with innumerable vegetable products, peopled with men to the potential figure of a thousand millions, swarming still more potentially with the lower animals, and so flooded with microscopic life that almost every cubic inch of air and water and soil is panting with an incalculable population, some of whose smaller individuals multiply themselves into one hundred and seventy billions in four days; gather their five hundred millions in a single drop of water; and yet make up, with the stony cerements of the merest fraction of their fossil ancestry, whole mountains and geologic beds. Such is our world. Out in

which we call the sun, with its invisible retinue of a hundred earths; out in yonder vault, when night falls, find a thousand suns similarly attended; with tube Galilean, thousands more; with tube Herschelian, millions more; with tube Rossian, billions more. Is this the end? Not even Darwin doubts that successive improvements in the space-penetrating power of our instruments would go on indefinitely opening up firmaments at every step. Where is the verge of the universe? Who would undertake the roll-call of its orbs? Who dares to say that he could count through the grand total of its firmaments, even though he should count a thousand years? Figures go but a small way toward expressing the dimensions of such a universe—whether one considers the number of its worlds or the expanse of space through which they are distributed. Our world spins round its ellipse, of well-nigh two hundred million axis, without ever having a neighbor nearer than thirty millions of miles, save its own moon. The interval between our sun and the nearest star of the same galactic nebula is twelve hundred thousand times this distance. And then the distance from nebula to nebula—it is absolutely awful. Our telescopes sweep a sphere of stars whose diameter is seven millions of years, as light travels. Calculation covers its abashed face with its great wings in the presence of these overwhelming amplitudes. And such is nature!

Certainly such a universe as this does not cry out *against* the existence of a God whose essential attribute is immensity. On the contrary, it is just such a universe as one would have *expected* to come from such a being. Nay, given a Deity who is practically at home in every point of space, whose attributes are laid out on a scale of unbounded vastness, to whom it is just as easy to make and govern a trillion of worlds as it is a grain of sand, and the imperial fitness of things would *demand* that He people vacancy with very much that profusion and breadth of being that we actually see. The work ought to express and honor the workman. And when I am *told* of an author of nature who is immense with a threefold boundlessness of intelligence, might and years; so that to Him our great and small, our far and near, our centre and circumference—though that circumference sweep around all the expanses of modern astronomy—are practically the same; so that He can properly challenge, “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” when I am told of this, and I then place myself out under the open dome of nature, amid its exuberant

objects and marvellous stretches, I feel that the doctrine matches facts ; that the theory has in its favor a comprehensive verisimilitude and presumption ; that nature, instead of saying, " There is no immense God," significantly asks, in a tone of encouragement and with a look of incipient expectation, " Is there *not* such a Being ?" . . . A God who Himself has no duration to speak of—if there may be such a God—would never have stored His nature with such mighty cycles ; a God who Himself never did a swift thing would never have set His laws to spurring on planets and suns so astoundingly ; a God who Himself never did a slow thing would never have yoked such slow-footed forces to events, as we observe actually dragging at some of them. It is only a God who has substantial forevers on His hands, and who on occasion can lighten and on occasion can linger ineffably along the highway of His purposes, who is properly represented by such a nature. *E. F. Burr.*

28, 29. If any of those false prophets have a dream, let them tell it as a mere dream, a simple fancy of the mind in sleep ; but let them and let all who hear them distinguish broadly between such dreams and My words. If I give My word to any prophet, let him utter it faithfully at whatever cost—a suggestion not without its use to Jeremiah. What hath the chaff to do with the wheat, saith the Lord ? Let chaff go for chaff and nothing better. Never let it arrogate a place for itself with the wheat and claim to be wheat. In verse 29 the point on which these questions bear might be either the energy of God's word in its power on human hearts in general, or its energy when God puts it in the hearts of His prophets to deliver to lost men. The former seems on the whole the preferable view as setting forth the essential, eternal distinction between the wheat and the chaff. Yet the latter has a great truth in it—viz., that God's word in the heart of a prophet was with burning power, as Jeremiah had occasion to say. (See 20 : 9.) But this latter thought is really included under the former. *H. C.*

28. Speak My word faithfully. The weapons which the pulpit-speaker wields are *truths* and *facts*, than which the Divine Mind knows none more vast and momentous ; are *principles* unchangeable as the pillars of heaven, on which God conducts His own great affairs ; are *motives* which the divinity Himself obeys ; are *interests* which are transcendent, immeasurable, infinite. He brings messages which involve all good, all evil ; all time, all

eternity. He brings messages from Jehovah. *C. White.*

The Book is full of vital principles, resting upon great and permanently fruitful facts. In the use of this treasury it is the preacher's business to bring forth things new and old, to be progressive and conservative, to spread a fresh and inviting banquet. The old statements must not be discarded or ignored ; but they must not be mechanically repeated. Their vital energy must be eliminated ; and in this very way there will be real progress, a constantly clearer and better apprehension of what the real mind of Christ is. *Behrends.*

From the pulpit there should now and ever flow a pure river of water of life clear as crystal. The grand doctrine of justification by faith only should be uplifted as a beacon on a thousand hills. Hearers should be distinctly taught our grand verities : the Father's eternal love, the terms of the unfailing covenant, the Son's perfect and finished work, the Spirit's indwelling, the beauty and simplicity and purport of our Sacraments, the evidence of faith, the might of prayer, the delight of praise, the labor of love, the patience of hope, the loveliness of purity, the high walk of uprightness, the solemnity of worship, the happiness of godly life. Where such faithful teaching abounds there is no room for fear. Them that honor God, God will honor. *Lavo.*

What is wanted now, and silently called for, is the preaching of just such a Christ as the charities, and miracles, and fellow-tendernesses, and death, and resurrection of Jesus put in outline before us : God in Christ reconciling the world ; He that could suffer, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God ; He that could endure enemies and came down from heaven to bear the curse of their bad lot to gain them ; He that loved the poor and feared not the great ; He that flavored the world by living in it ; He that went through society and made His quickening, medicating power felt everywhere ; He that has gone up to prepare mansions and to set His judgment-seat for the world. Oh, if He could now be preached, as He might be and some time will, what a cleaving to Him would there be ! And the supernatural glory of His life and works, instead of being an objection, would only kindle the greater fire. *Bushnell.*

Preach Jesus Christ. Preach Him in the meekness and loveliness of His heart ; preach Him in the grandeur of His death and the glory of His resurrection ; preach Him in the beauty of His conduct ; preach Him in the sublime exactions of His morality ; preach Him

for the remission of sins ; preach Him as the power of an endless life. Preach Him as Paul preached Him to Jew and Greek, barbarian and Roman ; not with enticing speculations, but in the demonstration and the power of the Holy Ghost ; out of the depths of an experience growing richer and a knowledge growing clearer and larger ; out of the peace of God which passeth understanding and the love of God which passeth knowledge ; by gentle, lucid and courageous speech ; by judicious and heroic silence ; by patience and fortitude and faith ; by forbearance and by deed, preach Him the life and light of men. Preach Him as He preached Himself, the shepherd of lost sheep, the likeness of the Father, the friend of sinners, the Redeemer of mankind. *C. J. Little.*

We would fain have the ministry of the Word of God surrounded with all that can serve to win attention, command reverence and excite interest ; we should be alert to look out for such things, and to secure them so far as we may ; but let us see to it that they be but subordinate, that they all are used as aids to what is far higher and more important than themselves—that within this husk the pure grain of God's Word is enshrined and preserved. What is the good of any preaching or instruction, however pleasing or attractive it may be, that does not set the pure wheat of God's Word before hungry souls ? Souls must live, and they cannot live on chaff. C.

Fill with food, *not flowers*. Hungry men cannot eat flowers. Food, *not chaff*. Chaff is worse than flowers ; they are at least pleasant to look at before they fade, but dry, tasteless preaching gives neither pleasure nor profit. The finest of the wheat is in the granary, and only needs serving out. But *fill*, do not give short measure. There need be no stint. There is plenty. The less the mind that comes, the more pains should be taken that it has a full sack. *T. Champness.*

Grace is contented with the simplicity of the Gospel ; gifts are not contented therewithal. You see how it is with a child that comes into a corn-field ; he is mightily taken with the blue or red weeds or the daisies that grow there ; but now, when the husbandman comes, he looks at the corn, and is not so much taken with the blue and red weeds, or the company of daisies, but is taken with the corn itself. So take a man that hath gifts only, and bring him to a sermon or a prayer, and if there be any fine expressions, any daisies, he is much taken with them ; he prizeth and magnifieth them, and he hangs on them. But now bring a man that

hath grace to a prayer or to a sermon, and he looks at the corn ; he doth not look at the daisies so much, but at the spirituality and power of those things that are there delivered. *Gurnall.*

The Gospel is either true history or it is a consummate fraud ; it is either a reality or an imposition. Christ was what He professed to be or He was an impostor. There is no other alternative. His spotless life, His earnest enforcement of the truth, His suffering in its defence, forbid us to suppose that He was following an illusion of a heated brain. Every act of His pure and holy life shows that He was the author of truth, the advocate of truth, the earnest defender of truth and the uncomplaining sufferer for truth. Now, considering the purity of His doctrines, the simplicity of His life and the sublimity of His death, is it possible that He would have died for an illusion ? In all His preaching, the Saviour made no popular appeals. His discourses were all directed to the individual. Christ and His apostles sought to impress upon every man the conviction that he must stand or fall alone—he must live for himself and die for himself, and give up his account to the omniscient God as though he were the only dependent creature in the universe. The Gospel leaves the individual sinner alone with himself and his God. To his own Master he stands or falls. He has nothing to hope from the aid and sympathy of associates. The deluded advocates of new doctrines do not so preach. Christ and His apostles, had they been deceivers, would not have so preached. If clergymen in our day would return to the simplicity of the Gospel, and preach more to individuals and less to the crowd, there would not be so much complaint of the decline of true religion. Many of the ministers of the present day take their text from Paul, and preach from the newspapers. When they do so, I prefer to enjoy my own thoughts, rather than to listen. I want my pastor to come to me in the spirit of the Gospel, saying, “ You are mortal ; your probation is brief ; your work must be done speedily. You are immortal, too. You are hastening to the bar of God ! the Judge standeth before the door.” When I am thus admonished, I have no disposition to muse or to sleep. *Daniel Webster.*

There are two ways of regarding a sermon, either as a human composition or a Divine message. If once we begin to regard the preacher, whatever his faults, as a man sent with a message to us, which it is a matter of life or death whether we hear or refuse ; if we look upon

him as set in charge over many spirits in danger of ruin, and having allowed to him but an hour or two in the seven days to speak to them ; if we make some endeavor to conceive how precious these hours ought to be to him, a small vantage on the side of God, after His flock has been exposed for six days together to the full weight of the world's temptation, he has but thirty minutes to get at the separate hearts of a thousand men, to convince them of their weaknesses, to shame them for all their sins, to warn them of all their dangers, to try this way and that to stir the hard fastenings of those doors where the Master Himself has stood and knocked yet none opened, and to call at the openings of those dark streets where Wisdom herself hath stretched forth her hand and no man regarded—thirty minutes to raise the dead in—let us but once understand and feel this ; and we shall wish that His words may be simple even when they are sweetest, and the place from which He speaks like a marble rock in the desert, about which the people have gathered in their thirst. *Ruskin.*

His sole object will be to make the message clearly understood, and to wrap its burning imperative around the hearer's conscience. The axe must be sharpened, that something may be cut down. The rifle must be loaded, and sighted with the care of an expert that the bullet may speed unerringly to its mark. The bandages and balm must be prepared that wounded hearts may be healed. Not reputation, but righteousness, must be the preacher's ambition. He cannot be too careful in his analysis. He cannot have too much living logic. He must remember that nothing can bind the will which is not true to the reason ; that the understanding supplies the rule of judgment to the conscience. He cannot have too much healthy passion ; and he will have all the feeling he can take care of if moral verities are real to him. But he must lose himself in his hearers. He must seek them, not theirs, not even their applauses, least of all himself. It must be his habitual passion to save them, to save them from sin, to save them here and now, to bring them face to face with God in Jesus Christ, until they discern their dignities and duties as the sons and daughters of God, and live accordingly. It is not the future, but the present with which he deals. It is not heaven which he is called upon to people, but to Christianize mortal men and women, and convert earthly society, in all its multitudinous activities and competitions, into the kingdom of God. It is a historical judgment and a histori-

cal redemption which constitute the burden of ancient prophecy, and which Paul has so graphically sketched in the first chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. They are in time ; we have been disposed to push them to the end of time. And so we talk of a final judgment, as if there were no great white throne now ; and we talk of a future salvation, as if man's great business was to prepare for death, as if heaven were some fairy, shadowy country whose glories were never meant to make this planet radiant. But the New Jerusalem which John saw in his exile was not a city in celestial places, nor did it hang in mid air. It came down from God, out of heaven upon earth. Rome was to yield to its immortal sovereignty. The gates of pearl, the walls of jasper, the streets of gold, the river of life proceeding from the throne of God and of the lamb, and the tree of life whose leaves are for healing of nations, are symbols, one and all, of an earthly empire of righteousness. It is a historical triumph which the apocalypse heralds, coming through broken seals and emptied vials of judgment, and sounding trumpets, by famine, and earthquake, and the convulsions of nations and the overthrow of Babylon, and the sealing of the pit and the resurrection of martyrs, and the second death ; just as Daniel had seen the stone smite the image of gold, silver, brass, iron and clay symbols of unsanctified political power, grinding it to powder, and filling the whole earth ; and to secure that historical triumph of righteousness in this land, and in all lands, is the sole work to which we are to spend our energies. Not to get men into heaven, but to get heaven into men, is our business ; not, as has been well said, "to keep them out of hell, but to keep hell out of them" is our commission. *Behrends.*

29. "Is not My word like as a fire ? saith the Lord ; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces ?" Here we have the native inherent energy of Divine truth, set forth under appropriate figures. It has power to consume all our inward corruptions, and to kindle upon the altar of our hearts the pure flame of love and zeal ; it has power to reduce to contrition the stoutest and most obdurate heart of man, even the heart which seems to promise most resistance to its agency. *E. M. G.*

The word of God is like fire. The law was a fiery law (De. 33 : 2), and of the Gospel Christ says, "I am come to send fire on the earth" (Luke 12 : 49). Fire has different effects, according as the matter is on which it works ; it hardens clay, but softens wax ; it consumes the dross, but purifies the gold ; so the word of God is to

some a savor of life unto life, to others of death unto death. God appeals here to the consciences of those to whom the word was sent, "Is not My word like fire? Has it not been so to you? (Zech. 1:6). Speak as you have found." It is compared likewise to a hammer breaking the rock in pieces. The unhumiliated heart of man is like a rock; if it will not be melted by the word of God as the fire, it will be broken to pieces by it as the hammer. Whatever opposition is given to the word will be borne down and broken to pieces. H.

In all lands and ages a Bible ministry has been a ministry of power. "Is not My word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Yes, both fire and hammer, both shield and sword, both spade and pruning hook, both bread and water. Wonderful in the variety of its adaptations is the word of the Lord! With it we are strong, with it we are wise. With it we are ready for all duties and for all conflicts. And the helmet of brass that has protected us through life will be a pillow of down to rest our heads on in the hour of death. A home where the Bible is studied and obeyed will be thoroughly furnished even if there are no carved and upholstered sofas in it. Bible truth and Bible love will adorn the rudest environment and make palatable the coarsest fare. A heart in which the Bible is enshrined will be a holy and a happy heart, though it beat in a body racked with pain. A Christian filled with the Bible and feeding daily on its promises will be strong in the Lord. A plant of righteousness rooted in the Scriptures will be "like a tree by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." The great want in the Church to-day is a more thorough Gospel furnishing—a more systematic and prayerful study of the Scriptures. *Interior.*

In the forty years of my ministry I have only touched the hem of the garment of Divine truth; but what virtue has flowed out of it! The word is like its Author, infinite, immeasurable, without end. If you were ordained to be a preacher throughout eternity, you would

have before you a theme equal to everlasting demands. *Spurgeon.*

30. The crime of these false prophets lay in stealing these words, these prophetic formulae. They are said to steal them every one from his neighbor, but originally they came from the true prophets, and really from God Himself. Then they passed them round among themselves from hand to hand—stolen goods—used by them to make the people think they were God's true prophets, and bore His messages.

31. To "use their tongues" is here to make too free use of them—to misuse them. *How* they misused them will be understood from the remarks just made in notes on verse 30.

33. If any one—prophet, priest or of the people—should ask Jeremiah what "the burden of the Lord" is, in the well-understood sense, What message of calamity does the Lord send? he was told what to answer: I will even forsake you, saith the Lord. The utmost depth of ruin lay in that burden. To be forsaken of the Lord was the direst calamity that could befall them, or any of us either.

35-37. In these verses the Lord instructs the people what phraseology they may fitly use, and solemnly cautions them against the usage of the false prophets above referred to which had grown up into a grievous abuse. They might properly say, "What hath the Lord answered" or "what hath He spoken?" But they must not say, "The burden of the Lord," since this phrase belonged exclusively to God and His true prophets, and the wicked perversion of it by any false prophet would be done at his own peril.

40. If they persisted in abusing these solemn words, sacredly appropriated to signify revelations direct from God, He would terribly punish them, forgetting, forsaking them and casting them forth from their city and land to make them a perpetual reproach and shame. This should be the righteous doom of the false prophets, and of all who gave currency to their delusions by abetting their objects and helping them to assume the phraseology and reputation of true prophets. H. C.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTER XXIV.

24 : 1 THE LORD shewed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs set before the temple of the LORD ; after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the craftsmen and smiths, 2 from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. One basket had very good figs, like the figs that are first ripe : and the other basket had very bad figs, which could not be eaten, 3 they were so bad. Then said the LORD unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah ? And I said, Figs ; the good figs, very good ; and the bad, very bad, that cannot be eaten, they are so bad. 4, 5 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel ; Like these good figs, so will I regard the captives of Judah, whom I have sent out of this 6 place into the land of the Chaldeans, for good. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land : and I will build them, and not pull them down ; 7 and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD : and they shall be my people, and I will be their God : for they shall 8 return unto me with their whole heart. And as the bad figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so bad ; surely thus saith the LORD, So will I give up Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the 9 land of Egypt : I will even give them up to be tossed to and fro among all the kingdoms of the earth for evil ; to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither 10 I shall drive them. And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers.

Chap. 24. This is one of those prophecies which were delivered after the reign of Jehoiakim, and in the former or peaceable part of Zedekiah's reign, before he renounced his allegiance to the king of Babylon. We cannot be mistaken in placing this chapter at the very beginning of Zedekiah's reign, within the first year at least, since the vision is dated from after the carrying away of Jeconiah and the people with him into captivity, as from an event which happened but a little before. *Blayney.*—The date and subject of this short chapter are obvious—the date being after the second deportation of captives to Babylon at the close of the short reign of Jehoiachin (“Jeconiah”), and, indeed, after Zedekiah, his successor, had ascended the throne. The subject is the character of those who were carried to Babylon in contrast with the character of those who remained behind. H. C.

This short chapter helps us to put a very comfortable construction upon a great many long ones, by showing us that the same providence which to some is a savor of death unto death, may by the grace and blessing of God be made to others a savor of life unto life ; and that though God's people share with others in the same calamity, yet that it is not the same to them that it is to others, but is designed for their good, and shall issue in their good ; to

them it is a correcting rod in the hand of a tender Father, while to others it is an avenging sword in the hand of a righteous Judge. H

During the miserable eleven years of Zedekiah's reign, the prophet had consistently declared that not the king and the nobles and people of Jerusalem were God's true Israel, but the exiles carried captive to Babylon with Jeconiah. In chap. 24 he compares these latter to a basket of very good figs, like those first ripe, while Zedekiah and his people were but the refuse, “very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad.” I need not say how irritating such a method of treatment would be to both king and nobles ; but at Babylon it had a different effect. Jeremiah, though not without opposition, became the great authority there. He wrote the exiles also a letter (chap. 29), directing them to dwell quietly at Babylon, and build houses, and plant gardens, and take wives, and in all things prepare for a lengthened sojourn of seventy years. They were even “to seek the peace of Babylon,” and settle down as loyal and industrious citizens. And then God would grant them a return to their land ; in them the fortunes of Israel would revive ; for they were Jehovah's people, the possessors of the promise, and not Zedekiah and his court, and the dwellers at Jerusalem, for whom Jeremiah pre-

dicts nothing but evil and misery, and again contemptuously calls them "vile figs, too bad to be eaten" (verse 17.)

As time rolled on, and the destruction of Jerusalem confirmed the truth of the prophet's words, his prediction of a restoration after seventy years became the great solace of the exiles. They read with pleasure how God had chosen them as the depositories of the promise, even while Jerusalem was still standing; they saw that that promise was not bound up so much with places and things as with true and believing hearts. And gradually a change passed over them. No doubt among the exiles there were many whose characters had been formed by Jeremiah, and who wrought heartily for the same ends. The children of the men who had stood by Josiah in his reforms were the dominant leaders at Babylon. And there they prevailed. Instead of the old longing for idolatry, a passionate devotion to the one true spiritual God became inwrought deeply into their hearts. And Jeremiah they felt to be, as in truth he was, the deliverer of their nation. The man who in life had been branded as a traitor and falsehearted, became the object of their fervent love. R. P. S.

1-3. The prophet indicates that these baskets of figs are seen in vision only, and have no reality in actual life. He did not say, "The Lord sent me to gather one basket of first ripe figs, very good, and another of foul rotten figs, and I did so;" but he says, "The Lord *showed me*"—i.e., by the Spirit upon me *caused me to see* two baskets, etc. The deportation of captives with Jeconiah took away the better class—the princes, artisans and mechanics who had more stamina of character, and would be more useful to the king of Babylon in his great building schemes, than the lower, less skilled, less industrious classes. The author of 2 Kings (in chap. 24:14-16) was careful to state precisely this fact—that Nebuchadnezzar took away all the better people, "the mighty of the land," the skilful mechanics as well as the princes. The selection and removal of these classes would not only augment the working force in Babylon, but would lessen the working force in Jerusalem.

4-7. The basket of good figs represented these better classes taken away to Babylon. In His kind and wise providence the Lord had taken this method to sift the nation and save the more precious grain for replanting in the land after the captivity. The Lord twice sifted the Jewish people to get good seed wherewith to replant the land; first, in taking away,

under Nebuchadnezzar, the more industrious and skilful citizens, who may, on this very ground, be safely presumed to have been less corrupt morally, and less debased by idolatry, than the indolent classes. Laziness and idleness are Satan's recruiting officers. He never fails to find work for idle hands to do. Then, again, the Lord sifted the captive population when the decree of Cyrus invited them to return to their land. The men of faith in God, the men who cherished most fondly in their hearts the love of their holy city and sacred Temple and the classic memories of their heroic dead, would tear themselves away from their Chaldean homes and their accumulated comforts, and strike out upon the hardships of a wilderness journey and of a new settlement. This call would also somewhat test their physical energy. Invalids and men broken down by their vices or their age would shrink from these hardships. These better people taken to Babylon, the Lord would meet there with His blessing. H. C.

5. God owns their captivity to be His doing; whoever were the instruments of it, He ordered and directed it; I have sent them out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans. It is God that puts His gold into the furnace to be tried; His hand is, in an especial manner, to be eyed in the afflictions of good people. The judge orders the malefactor into the hand of an executioner, but the father corrects the child with his own hand. Even this uncomfortable captivity God intended for their benefit, and we are sure that His intentions are never frustrated: I have sent them into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. It seemed to be every way for their hurt, not only as it was the ruin of their estates, honors and liberties, parted them from their relations and friends, and put them under the power of their enemies and oppressors, but as it sunk their spirits, discouraged their faith, deprived them of the benefit of God's oracles and ordinances, and exposed them to temptations; and yet it was designed for their good, and proved so, in the issue, as to many of them. By their afflictions they were humbled under the hand of God, taught to pray, and turned from their iniquity, particularly they were cured of their inclination to idolatry; and thus it was good for them that they were afflicted.

6. God assures them of His protection in their trouble, and a glorious deliverance out of it in due time (verse 6). Being sent into captivity for their good, they shall not be lost there; but it shall be with them as it is with gold which the refiner puts into the furnace.

He has his eye upon it while it is there, and it is a careful eye, to see that it sustain no damage : I will set Mine eyes upon them for good, to order everything for the best. He engages to prepare them for these temporal mercies which He designed for them, by bestowing spiritual mercies upon them. It is this that will make their captivity be for their good ; this shall be both the improvement of their affliction, and their qualification for deliverance. When our troubles are sanctified to us, then we may be sure that they will end well. Now that which is promised is that they should be better acquainted with God ; they should learn more of God by His providences in Babylon than they had learned by all His oracles and ordinances in Jerusalem, thanks to Divine grace, for if that had not wrought mightily upon them in Babylon, they would forever have forgotten God. It is here promised, I will give them, not so much a head to know Me, as a heart to know Me, for the right knowledge of God consists not in notion and speculation, but in the convictions of the practical judgment directing and governing the will and affections. H.

A heart to know the Lord. It was "for good" that God sent the captive portion of His people "into the land of the Chaldeans" (verse 5). The germs of the better life of the future were preserved in them, and their very tribulations were the instruments of His gracious purpose and blessings in disguise. In the "evil figs"—the refuse left behind—there was nothing worth preserving (verse 8). Of all the beneficent Divine purposes, this had in it the promise of highest good—"I will give them an heart to know Me, that I am the Lord." W.

8-10. On the other hand, the remnant that were left in the land, including those also who went into Egypt, were the dregs of the population, and God let them gravitate to the very bottom of human existence, and finally become extinct. They went into Egypt in defiance of the Lord's repeated warnings by His prophet. Their going was itself proof of their vain confidence in themselves and in human help, in contempt of the word of the Lord their God. Hence they could rationally expect nothing better than His exterminating curse. It never can be well for men to press their way in a course of defiance against the warnings of Jehovah. What can result from such a course but ruin ! This chapter is a beautiful lesson on the ways of God in His providence over nations and entire classes of men. With far-reaching plans, with perfect command of all

the agencies of war and of captivity, with full control over the master mind of Nebuchadnezzar, and of his schemes for building great Babylon, the Lord makes all these agencies subserve His purpose of sifting the Jewish people, and taking out for His future use all the nobler elements. These He purposed to convert to Himself, under the discipline of this fearful captivity, and then to lead them back to rebuild His city and Temple, to reconstruct the Hebrew nation, and to nurture the germs of their religious life, till in the fulness of time, the Messiah should come. What cannot this all-wise and all-pervading providence of God accomplish ! Was ever anything too hard for the Lord ! Let such manifestations of His Divine power and wisdom inspire our confidence afresh in His resources now and evermore to fulfil all His plans of mercy for His Zion and for this lost world. H. C.

The exposition and application of this vision. God intended by it to raise the dejected spirits of those that were gone into captivity, by assuring them of a happy return, and to humble and awaken the proud and secure spirits of those who continued yet in Jerusalem, by assuring them of a miserable captivity. The good figs were the first ripe ; these represented the pious captives, that seemed first ripe for ruin, for they went first into captivity, but should prove first ripe for mercy, and their captivity should help to ripen them ; these are pleasing to God, as good figs are to us, and shall be carefully preserved for use.

The best men may be the greatest sufferers. The good figs represent the Jews who suffered most severely from the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, who were torn from their homes, robbed of their property, driven into captivity ; the bad figs represent the seemingly more fortunate Jews over whose head the tide of invasion passes, leaving them still in their homes and in quiet, and also those who escaped from it entirely, by a flight into Egypt. We may often notice that very good people are not only not spared, but suffer the most severe calamities. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." Therefore chastisement is an evidence of God's love. Good men should understand this, and not be surprised at the advent of trouble, but expect it ; not be dismayed at the incongruity of it, but recognize its fitness ; not despair of themselves, and think that they must be hypocrites after all, nor doubt and distrust God, but submit to what is clearly foretold and wisely arranged. *Adeney.*

It is to be noticed also that the figure chosen to set forth the difference between the good and the bad in Israel is *taken from fruit*. It was something presented as the result of growth and in connection with culture. The question was suggested how such a difference should come between the good and the bad. For if trees of the same sort grow in the same soil and have the same attention, and the same external influences, how comes some of the fruit to be very good and some very bad? Notice also the *sharpness of the distinction*. These fruits were

either good or bad. To be excluded from one is to be included in the other. There is no third, no medium class. This exactly agrees with the way of speaking in the New Testament, especially by Jesus Himself—*e.g.*, the seed in the good and bad ground, the sheep and goats, the good kinds of fish and the bad ones, the five wise and the five foolish virgins. It is of the first importance to bear in mind that the imperceptible gradations, as we reckon them, count for nothing with God. There are only two kinds of hearts, the good and the bad. Y.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTER XXV.

- 25 : 1** THE word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah; the same was the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; the which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying: From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even unto this day, these three and twenty years, the word of the LORD hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising up early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear; saying, Return ye now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers, from of old and even for evermore: and go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the work of your hands; and I will do you no hurt. Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the work of your hands to your own hurt. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts: Because ye have not heard my words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and I will send unto Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations. Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it desolate for ever. And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations. For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them, even of them: and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the work of their hands.
- 15** For thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto me: Take the cup of the wine of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. And they shall drink, and reel to and fro, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them. Then took I the cup at the LORD's hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the LORD

18 had sent me : *to wit*, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, an hissing, and a curse ; as it is
 19 this day ; Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people ;
 20 and all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land
 21 of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Gaza, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod ; Edom,
 22 and Moab, and the children of Ammon ; and all the kings of Tyre, and all the kings of Zidon,
 23 and the kings of the isle which is beyond the sea ; Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all that
 24 have the corners of *their hair* polled ; and all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the
 25 mingled people that dwell in the wilderness ; and all the kings of Zimri, and all the kings of
 26 Elam, and all the kings of the Medes ; and all the kings of the north, far and near, one with
 another ; and all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth : and the
 27 king of Sheshach shall drink after them. And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD
 of hosts, the God of Israel : Drink ye, and be drunken, and spue, and fall, and rise no more,
 28 because of the sword which I will send among you. And it shall be, if they refuse to take the
 cup at thine hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts : Ye
 29 shall surely drink. For, lo, I begin to work evil at the city which is called by my name, and
 should ye be utterly unpunished ? Ye shall not be unpunished : for I will call for a sword
 30 upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts. Therefore prophesy thou
 against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and
 utter his voice from his holy habitation ; he shall mightily roar against his fold ; he shall
 31 give a shout, as they that tread *the grapes*, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise
 shall come even to the end of the earth ; for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations, he
 will plead with all flesh ; as for the wicked, he will give them to the sword, saith the LORD.
 32 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great
 33 tempest shall be raised up from the uttermost parts of the earth. And the slain of the LORD
 shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth : they
 shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried ; they shall be dung upon the face of the
 34 ground. Howl, ye shepherds, and cry ; and wallow yourselves *in ashes*, ye principal of the
 flock : for the days of your slaughter are fully come, and I will break you in pieces, and ye
 35 shall fall like a pleasant vessel. And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the princi-
 36 pal of the flock to escape. A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and the howling of the prin-
 37 cipal of the flock ! for the LORD layeth waste their pasture. And the peaceable folds are
 38 brought to silence because of the fierce anger of the LORD. He hath forsaken his covert, as
 the lion : for their land is become an astonishment because of the fierceness of the oppressing
sword, and because of his fierce anger.

Chap. 25. The date of this chapter is definitely given—viz., in the fourth year of Jehoiakim was also the first of King Nebuchadnezzar—the very year in which the first great invasion of Judea was made by the combined forces of Chaldea, Moab, Ammon and Syria. (See 2 K. 24 : 1, 2.) The great central thought of the chapter is, *Jehovah, King of the nations of the earth*, judging and punishing them for their iniquities ; beginning here with His own covenant but now apostate people ; continuing and widening the sweep of His judgments, so as to include Egypt and all those powers of Western Asia which had allied themselves with Egypt and Judea against the Chaldean empire ; and then, after seventy years, turning His hand in righteous retribution to judge and punish the Chaldeans and proud Babylon. How God would bring about these visitations of judgment ; how He would pass around among all

the nations the wine-cup of His wrath, and make them drink to their own infatuation, and reeling, and madness, so that they would fall an easy prey to those enemies whom the Lord would use as His rod for their destruction, are also embraced in this chapter. H. C.

This chapter seems to come next in succession to chaps. 22, 23. It is dated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and most probably belonged to the earliest part of that year. For the defeat of the Egyptians at Carchemish, and the subsequent taking of Jerusalem, are both placed in the same year. But from verse 9 I think it may be concluded that Nebuchadnezzar had but just entered upon his expedition, and had not yet carried into execution any of those designs for which God there says He would “send and take” him. The prophet reproveth the Jews for their disregard of the Divine calls to repentance (verses 1-7). He

foretelleth their subjugation, together with that of the neighboring nations, to the king of Babylon for seventy years, and the fall of the Babylonish empire at that period (verses 8-14). The same is foreshown under the symbol of the cup of God's wrath, with which Jeremiah is sent, perhaps in a vision, unto all the nations, which are enumerated at large, to make them drink of it to their utter subversion (verses 15-29). And the like prophecy is the third time repeated in a strain of sublime and poetic imagery (verse 30 to the end). *Blayney.*

3, 4. In verse 3 the prophet solemnly reminds the people how long he had been bearing to them the messages of the Lord, even since the thirteenth year of Josiah—then twenty-three years. Josiah reigned thirty-one years; Jehoahaz three months; Jehoiakim was now in his fourth year. Hence the footing stands thus: Under Josiah say nineteen; under the next two kings four—equal to twenty-three. He reminds them also that he had brought these messages in solemn earnestness, rising up early and speaking, as one awake betimes, upon whose heart the burden lay so heavily that his sleep was short and the morning hour found him waiting and full of ardor for his work. But they had not hearkened. Other prophets, too, Zephaniah and Habakkuk, had the Lord sent to them. *H. C.*

Jeremiah had been a constant preacher among them twenty-three years; he began in the thirteenth year of Josiah, who reigned thirty-one years; so that he prophesied about eighteen or nineteen years in his reign, then in the reign of Jehoahaz, and now four years of Jehoiakim's reign. God keeps an account, whether we do or no, how long we have enjoyed the means of grace; and the longer we have enjoyed them, the heavier will our account be if we have not improved them. *H.*

9. *Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant.* Kings and princes are the great instruments of providence with respect to human affairs. Some of them God raises up to be executioners of His judgments upon sinful people; such was he of whom God saith (Hos. 13:11), "I gave thee a king in Mine anger." Such was Nebuchadnezzar here spoken of, whom God calls His "servant," because he "wrought for Him," as God speaks concerning him (Ezek. 29:20)—that is, he executed God's judgments upon Tyre, God making use of his ambition and desire of conquest, and prospering his arms, in order to the punishment of the neighboring countries for their sins. See a like instance in the king of Assyria, whom

God calls "the rod of His anger" (Isa. 10:5). *W. Lowth.*

9-11. There is not the slightest doubt that Jeremiah, following Micah, who lived a century before, foretold the destruction and captivity in the Chaldean period, and added the notice of a return after seventy years. This is recorded in Jer. 25:9-11; and the circumstances are such, that if the delivery of this prophecy be denied, no event in the life of the prophets can be accepted. Now this issue could not have been foreseen by any natural means. The return of a departed people was against all historical analogies, as not only the case of the Ten Tribes showed, but the existing usage on which recent discoveries have thrown so much light, of occupying such conquered lands by an exchange of peoples, that admitted usually of no succeeding break or disturbance. Now the utterance of Jeremiah was fulfilled by the edict of Cyrus (B.C. 536), a fact which is not contested; and all that is required is to suppose that Jeremiah, instead of counting from the last siege and captivity (B.C. 588), counts from the first (B.C. 606), as captivity then really began. *Cairns.*

10. *The sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.* In the East the people grind their corn at break of day; and on going out in a morning, one hears everywhere the noise of the mill, accompanied with the voice and songs of those that grind. *Sir J. Chardin.*—There is an affecting contrast in the text. Gloomy shall be the silence of the morning, melancholy the shadows of the evening; no cheerful noise to animate the one, no enlivening ray to brighten the darkness of the other. Desolation shall everywhere reign. *Harmer.*

10, 11. In Oriental life the sound of the millstone is heard in every family, each one doing its grinding with its own hand-mill. So the light of a candle is among the necessities of comfortable life. Hence not only should all joyous sounds cease from those lands, but all the sounds of busy common life, indicating that the country was left void of inhabitants—an utter desolation. "An astonishment" of course means an occasion for astonishment to all the people of the earth; a marvel before the world. The duration of this wide sway of Babylon and of the Chaldean power should be seventy years. The records of profane history concur with the testimony of Scripture to confirm the fact here stated. Beginning with the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, the duration of that dynasty was seventy years, closing with its

subversion by Cyrus at the head of the combined armies of Media and Persia. In the line of profane history we have a witness, every way competent and worthy, in the so-called "Canon of Ptolemy," which contains a table of the reigns of the several monarchs of Babylon from B.C. 747 to B.C. 331—the end of the Persian dynasty. "This ancient document," remarks George Rawlinson, "which has always stood high in authority, has recently been confirmed in so many points by the inscriptions found in the ruins of Nineveh and Babylon, that its authentic character is established beyond all possibility of cavil and dispute." In this canon we have the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, forty-three years; of Evil-merodach, two; of Neriglissar, four; of Nabonned (alias Labynetus), seventeen; and jointly with him in the closing period of his reign, his son, Belshazzar; in all equal to sixty-six; an approximation to the scriptural record which seems to make the time about seventy. In the line of Scripture history, we have the authority of Daniel (9:1, 2), who in the first year after the fall of the Chaldean dynasty, finding by the prophecies of Jeremiah that the captivity was set for seventy years, saw in his own personal history that this period was near its close. He went to Babylon with the first captives in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and of course knew that he had been there then about seventy years. The length of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, the most important item in this chronological series, is in like manner confirmed by the concurrent testimony of both sacred and profane history. Sacred history gives us first the years of Jehoiakim coincident with Nebuchadnezzar—*i.e.*, eleven, less four, equal to seven. Add to this the years of the captivity of Jehoiachin, his immediate successor—*viz.*, thirty-six; the amount is forty-three. In the line of profane history, not only the "Canon of Ptolemy," but the testimony of Berosus makes his reign forty-three years. Of course in our text (verse 11) "the king of Babylon" is not to be restricted to any one king, but embraces the dynasty of Babylonian kings down to the Persian rule. See a different but accurate form of stating the same general fact in chap. 27:6, 7. H. C.

11. Those nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. The fixing of the time during which the captivity should last would be of great use, not only for the confirmation of the prophecy, when the event (which in this particular could by no human sagacity be foreseen) should exactly answer the prediction, but

for the comfort of the people of God in their calamity, and the encouragement of faith and prayer. Daniel, who was himself a prophet, had an eye to it (Dan. 9:2). Nay, God Himself had an eye to it (2 Chron. 36:22), for therefore He stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, that the word spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished. Known unto God are all His works, from the beginning of the world; which appears by this that when He has thought fit, some of them have been made known to His servants the prophets, and by them to His Church.

12-14. The ruin of Babylon, at last, is here likewise foretold, as it had been long before by Isaiah. The destroyers must themselves be destroyed and the rod thrown into the fire, when the correcting work is done with it. This shall be done when seventy years are accomplished, for the destruction of Babylon must make way for the deliverance of the captives. H.

And so it came to pass. After seventy years the Medo-Persian power subjugated Babylon, and struck the first fatal blow at her supremacy and pride. She never rose again to her former splendor. Not many years passed before the doom of desolation marched on apace to its accomplishment, and Babylon went rapidly down toward utter extinction. During more than two thousand years past it has been only a mass of ruins. Verse 13 seems to allude to those extended prophecies of Jeremiah "against all the nations" which we find in chaps. 46-51. Naturally the critics raise the question how this allusion can be accounted for in this place? Were those prophecies already written at this time? Or is this reference precisely prophetic—*i.e.*, in anticipation of portions yet to be written and embraced in this Book of Jeremiah? Or was this clause added by the compiler of these prophecies after all the materials of the volume had been written? I incline to the last-named supposition—*viz.*, that the last half of verse 13 was added by the compiler. In verse 14, the rather unusual phrase, "Serve themselves of them," means to exact service of them; to compel them to serve. The tables shall be turned; the relation between the parties reversed. Whereas Babylon made those nations her servants for seventy years, they shall make Babylon serve during other long periods thereafter. (See chap. 27:6, 7 and Isa. 14:2.)

15, 16. It gives us a vivid sense of the great truth so often illustrated in human history, that whom God would destroy He first leaves

to infatuation; or, in the terse phrase of the ancient heathen authors: "Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad."

17. "Made all the nations to drink," carries out the peculiar phraseology brought to view first in this prophet's original commission (chap. 1:10): "See, I have this day set thee over the nations to root out, to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant." What the prophet is commissioned to announce, he is said to do; or, as here, to "make" the nations do. Of course this is a *figurative* conception, involving no literal cup of wine whatever.

18. For obvious reasons, Jerusalem and Judah come first. Their sins had been most provoking to God. Indeed, it might be said, perhaps, that their case determined (as to time and manner) this whole series of judgments on the nations of Western Asia, calling forth those schemes of Divine providence which then raised up the great Chaldean power, and made it a hammer to break those nations in pieces. The clause, "As it is this day," seems to have been written by the compiler of these prophecies, who added it after the first great instalment of fulfilling events. H. C.—It is most likely that this narrative was either written by the prophet himself, or dictated by him to Baruch, who wrote for him, after the destruction of Jerusalem, when a compilation was made of all his prophecies; this supposition will account for the words, "as it is this day," found at the close of the 18th verse. *Blayney.*

19. Pharaoh of Egypt legitimately comes next. For many centuries, even back to the age of the early Pharaohs, the kingdom that sat on the Nile had been the pitted antagonist of the kingdom that sat on the Euphrates. Between these two great powers of ancient times, wars were frequent; antipathies eternal. Each sought to draw into alliance with itself whatever other tribes and sovereignties lay intermediate or adjacent. Hence, Egypt had drawn into her alliance the powers named in these subsequent verses, especially verses 20-24, and consequently involved them in her own doom. The first decisive blow against the Egyptian power was struck in the great battle at Carchemish, to which Jeremiah refers (chap. 46:2). From this she never rallied during the sway of this Chaldean dynasty. H. C.

19-26. Pharaoh, king of Egypt, comes next, because the Jews trusted to that broken reed (verse 19); the remains of them fled to Egypt, and then Jeremiah particularly foretold the de-

struction of that country (chap. 43:10, 11). All the other nations that bordered upon Canaan must pledge Jerusalem in this bitter cup, this cup of trembling. The mingled people, the Arabians, so some; some rovers of divers nations that lived by rapine, so others; the kings of the land of Uz, joined to the country of the Edomites. The Philistines had been vexatious to Israel, but now their cities and their lords became a prey to this mighty conqueror. Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Zidon are places well known to border upon Israel; the isles beyond or beside the sea are supposed to be those parts of Phœnicia and Syria that lay upon the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Dedan and the other countries mentioned (verses 23, 24) seem to have lain upon the confines of Idumea and Arabia the desert. Those of Elam are the Persians, with whom the Medes are joined, now looked upon as inconsiderable, and yet afterward able to make reprisals upon Babylon for themselves and all their neighbors. The kings of the north, that lay nearer to Babylon, and others that lay at some distance, will be sure to be seized on and made a prey of by the victorious sword of Nebuchadnezzar. Nay, he shall push on his victories with such incredible fury and success, that all the kingdoms of the world that were then and there known should become sacrifices to his ambition. Upon this whole matter we may observe: 1. That there is a God that judges in the earth, to whom all the nations of the earth are accountable, and by whose judgment they must abide. 2. That God can easily bring to ruin the greatest nations, the most numerous and powerful, and such as have been most secure. 3. That those who have been vexatious and mischievous to the people of God will be reckoned with for it at last. Many of these nations had in their turns given disturbance to Israel, but now comes destruction on them. The year of the Redeemer will come, even the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. H.

27-29. None of these nations could be excused from this wine-cup and its doom. Since the Lord had begun with His own people as having sinned against greater light, yet recognizing them still as His own, He could not judge them and leave other idolatrous nations unpunished. See this law of the Divine administration (1 Pet. 4:17, 18).

30-33. Calamities take a wide and fearful sweep. The nations of the earth are agitated with wars and conquests. A new power arises in the person of the Chaldean empire, and gains

a world-wide ascendancy, subjugating all other nations and tribes to its sway. This is fitly compared to the roaring of a lion and to his going forth to destroy ; or to an earthquake which rocks the nations from end to end of the inhabited world. H. C.

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JEREMIAH, CHAPTER XXIX.

29 : 1 Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders of the captivity, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon :
2 (after that Jeconiah the king, and the queen-mother, and the eunuchs, and the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the craftsmen, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem ;)
3 by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiyah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,) saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all the captivity, whom I have caused to be carried
5 away captive from Jerusalem unto Babylon : Build ye houses, and dwell in them ; and plant
6 gardens, and eat the fruit of them ; take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters ; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and
7 daughters ; and multiply ye there, and be not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the LORD for it : for in
8 the peace thereof shall ye have peace. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel : Let not your prophets that be in the midst of you, and your diviners, deceive you, neither
9 hearken ye to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely unto
10 you in my name : I have not sent them, saith the LORD. For thus saith the LORD, After seventy years be accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word
11 toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you hope in your
12 latter end. And ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken
13 unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your
14 heart. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD, and I will turn again your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven
15 you, saith the LORD ; and I will bring you again unto the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive. For ye have said, The LORD hath raised us up prophets in Babylon.
16 For thus saith the LORD concerning the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and concerning all the people that dwell in this city, your brethren that are not gone forth with you
17 into captivity ; thus saith the LORD of hosts : Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are
18 so bad. And I will pursue after them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be tossed to and fro among all the kingdoms of the earth, to be an execration, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations
19 whither I have driven them : because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, wherewith I sent unto them my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them ;
20 but ye would not hear, saith the LORD. Hear ye therefore the word of the LORD, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon.

- 21 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and concerning Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name : Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon ; and he shall
 22 slay them before your eyes ; and of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captives of Jūdah which are in Babylon, saying, The LORD make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab,
 23 whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire : because they have wrought folly in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken words in my name falsely, which I commanded them not ; and I am he that knoweth, and am witness, saith the LORD.
- 24, 25 And concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite thou shalt speak, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in thine own name unto all the people that are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest,
 26 and to all the priests, saying, The LORD hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the LORD, for every man that is mad, and
 27 maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldst put him in the stocks and in shackles. Now therefore, why hast thou not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet
 28 to you, forasmuch as he hath sent unto us in Babylon, saying, *The captivity is long* : build
 29 ye houses, and dwell in them ; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them ? And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet. Then came the word of
 31 the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite : Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto
 32 you, and I sent him not, and he hath caused you to trust in a lie ; therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed ; he shall not have a man to dwell among this people, neither shall he behold the good that I will do unto my people, saith the LORD : because he hath spoken rebellion against the LORD.

Chap. 29. According to the proper arrangement, this chapter appears to follow the 24th ; being the second of those which were delivered in the early part of Zedekiah's reign. (See the note at the beginning of chap. 24.) Some embarrassment and incoherence are to be perceived in particular parts of this chapter, which are removed by transposing verse 15 and placing it immediately before verse 21, where it stands in the version of the Septuagint. By this emendation a due order and connection is restored both in the place from whence the verse is removed and in that to which it is restored.

This chapter contains the substance of two letters written at different times, as is evident from comparing verse 28 with verses 4, 5 ; although the title at the beginning announces only one, and there is no mark of distinction to be found afterward. The distinction, however, is certainly to be made at the end of verse 20. For in the first letter the prophet exhorts the captives to accommodate themselves to their present circumstances, under an assurance that their captivity would last to the end of seventy years, after which period, and not before, God would visit and restore them. And to prevent their listening to any false suggestions that might flatter them with hopes of a speedy return, he informs them of what would happen

to their brethren that were left behind at Jerusalem, for whom a harder fate was reserved than for those that had been carried away. After this, finding, as it should seem, upon the return of the messengers, the little credit his first message had met with, he sends a second to the same persons, denouncing the Divine judgments against three of their false prophets, by whose influence chiefly the people had been prevented from hearkening to his good advice. *Blayney.*

The second letter by Jeremiah followed the first with no long interval. This letter shows that the Lord made use of Jeremiah in His spiritual care and culture, not only of the people remaining in Judea, but of those who were taken into captivity as well. The sympathies of the prophet were strongly with those captives. In his policy he warmly approved of their giving themselves up to the king of Babylon. He knew that God had repeatedly promised good to those who should do this, and that He depended on those captives to preserve His word and name among His people, and purposed to take from among them His choice seed for replanting the land of promise, and re-establishing the institutions of religion there. Hence He entered warmly into the spirit of this interesting correspondence. It is not clear that Jeremiah ever went to Babylon to labor with

his captive brethren there in person. The next thing to a personal visit—a kind, fraternal epistle—he could give them, and did. Of his mission to the Euphrates, referred to in chap. 13:1-7, nothing further is known, save that briefest possible notice. H. C.

1. *To the prophets.* Ezekiel and Daniel were then in captivity—Daniel in Babylon, and Ezekiel in Mesopotamia, on the river Chebar. Ezekiel did not begin prophesying till the fifth year of the captivity of Jeconiah; but Daniel was already acknowledged as a prophet of the Lord. There were probably other prophets also in that country, to whom Jeremiah addresses this letter; nor is it at all singular, that one prophet should advise and instruct others. David received instructions from Nathan; and Peter informs us that the prophets applied themselves to the study of the writings of the more ancient prophets. Daniel read and studied Jeremiah. The Chaldee, under the name of “prophets,” understands the scribes, or doctors of the law; the LXX translate the Hebrew by “false prophets.” *Calmet.*

1-3. “The remnant of the elders” are named specially and first among the parties addressed, because they have all along been the most hopeful class. If the reader will bear in mind, that falling back to a point twelve years before the captivity of Jehoiachin, we come to the death of Josiah, and that his great reformation commenced in his twelfth year, while his death occurred in his thirty-first, he will see that those nineteen years of reformation would lie within the active life of the elders here addressed. Might not these words of the prophet stir up in their hearts precious reminiscences of those better days? The reader will find this captivity of Jeconiah and others historically recorded in 2 K. 24:12-16; 2 Chron. 36:10, and referred to in Jer. 22:26; 28:4.

4-6. Let them by all means keep their eye on the hand and purpose of God in their captivity, and so the more patiently bear their privations and wait in hope for the good which lies at the end of all the Lord’s great purposes. This point having been suggested, the Lord directs them to make their homes there, to surround themselves as they might be able with the comforts of life, and raise up families so that they should be not diminished, but rather increased, because better times would surely come for their children to enjoy and to fill with their earnest and useful activities. H. C.

How to make the best of adversity. Jeremiah advises the captives in Babylon to take a course that is eminently brave and wise. The first in-

clination would be to stir up a useless revolt, the second to sit down in sullen despondency. When trouble overcomes us we are tempted to follow one or other of these courses—to rebel or to despair. Jeremiah teaches us, as he taught the Jews of his day, that neither is right. He indicates a better way. Submit patiently to inevitable adversity. Seek the brightest course under the darkest circumstances. The captives could not return home. They were not, therefore, to treat the land of their exile as a hopeless desert, but to build and plant and eat the fruit of it. Cherish hopes for the future under the most trying present circumstances. The Jews were to remember the promise of the restoration. They were not to allow their race to die out (verse 6). A great future was still before them. History has confirmed the prediction of the prophets. The scattered and ruined people were recalled to their homes. From the stock of the despondent exiles there sprang not only all that was great and good in later Jewish history, but also Jesus Christ and Christianity. In our darkest moments we should not forget that, though not a ray of light has yet appeared on the horizon, the sun will surely rise and the day return. Christianity is peculiarly a religion of the future; it encourages us to press forward to the golden age which is yet to come. *Adeney.*

7. It behoved them so to pray and labor for the good of even proud Babylon, that their spirit and life should adorn the religion of the God of their fathers. So they would make their life both useful and pleasant while they remained there, and would hopefully prepare the way for returning to their own more loved home, in the land made sacred by ancient promise and by their fathers’ graves. H. C.

God assures His people that Babylon’s peace is their peace. This sets before us a principle of action which Christian people cannot too diligently observe. While it is true that we are not of this world, but must constantly rise superior to its habits and maxims, yet at the same time we cannot do too much to maintain the stability of governments and the public order of the land in which we live. While the Spirit of God promotes the highest individuality, He also promotes the greatest order (1 Tim. 2:1-4). Y.

“In the peace thereof shall ye have peace.” All parts of the social system are so linked together by a law of mutual dependence and influence that the well-being of one is, in a measure, the well-being of all. “The eye cannot

say to the hand," etc. ; "Whether one member suffer," etc. We are all personally affected for good or ill by the political order and the general tone of the moral life around us. There are deep rankling wounds in the body politic—ignorance, drunkenness, roving beggary, domestic vice and violence, the systematic training of the young in crime, the oppression of the hireling in his wages, etc.—which it is to the interest of us all most earnestly to seek to heal. No class of the community can escape the ill effect of these things, and religion does but bring us into the deeper sympathy with those who most suffer by such forms of wrong. And we are bound to live for the world's highest benefit. "Seek the peace of the city, and pray to the Lord for it." Real peace is the fruit of righteousness. There can be none while the Divine order is violated and the Divine will set at naught. The Gospel is in every way God's message of peace to the world. The Church is called to be the "light of the world" and the "salt of the earth," as a witness for God's truth and righteousness. The Christian philanthropist alone has in his hands a thorough cure for the diseases and wounds of our humanity ; and of all the weapons he can wield in his conflict with them, none so mighty as prayer, inasmuch as that unseals the fount of all blessing, and brings down from heaven the healing, saving power. Well may a Christian apostle enlarge and emphasize the old prophetic message, saying, "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2 : 1-4). W.

Thus the primitive Christians, according to the temper of their holy religion, prayed for the powers that were, though they were persecuting powers. And if they were to pray for and seek the peace of the land of their captivity, much more reason have we to pray for the welfare of the land of our nativity, where we are a free people under a good government, that in the peace thereof we and ours may have peace. Every passenger is concerned in the safety of the ship. H.

8, 9. Even far away in Babylon and among the better class of the Jews, the false prophets and vain dreamers were still a curse to the people, and it was needful that the Lord through Jeremiah should warn them of these men. H. C.

10. *After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon.* This prophecy was first delivered in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and the same year it began to be put in execution, seventy

years from which time will bring us down to the first year of Cyrus, when he made proclamation for the restoration of the Jews, and the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem. If we fix the commencement of the seventy years at the time when Jerusalem was burned and destroyed, their conclusion will fall about the time when Darius issued his decree for rebuilding the Temple, after the work had been suspended. Or if we fix their commencement at the time when Nebuzaradan carried away the last remainder of the people, and completed the desolation of the land, their conclusion will fall about the time when the Temple was finished and dedicated, and the first passover was solemnized in it. "So that," as Dean Prideaux says, "taking it which way you will, and at what stage you please, the prophecy of Jeremiah will be fully and exactly accomplished concerning this matter." It may be said to have been accomplished at three different times and in three different manners ; and therefore, possibly, all might have been intended, though the first, without doubt, was the principal object of the prophecy. *Bp. Newton.*

I will visit you. There were but few of these captives, in comparison, who returned in person to their own country. (See Ezra 3 : 12.) So this promise was chiefly fulfilled in their posterity ; and it is common in Scripture to speak of blessings bestowed upon the children, as if they had been actually made good to their progenitors. *W. Louth.*

10, 11. It had been intimated in a somewhat indefinite way that the captivity would continue but seventy years (chap. 25 : 11, 12). The precise thing said there was that those nations, subdued by the king of Babylon, should serve him seventy years, and then the Lord would reverse those political relations and make Babylon the servant and other nations the masters. But here it is clearly said that after seventy years God would visit His people there and restore them to their own land. To confirm this to their wavering hearts, the Lord beautifully subjoins, "For I know My thoughts touching you, that they are thoughts of good and not of evil, to make your latter end hopeful and happy." H. C.

11. *Thoughts of peace.* Such is the consoling word that God sends to His "banished ones" in their affliction. He bids His servant "speak comfortably" to them, even now that their "warfare" is only beginning, and they are having their first taste of the bitterness of exile. Blending with the lamentations of the weeping captives as they "hung their

harp on the willows by the waters of Babylon," we can imagine that this gracious word would have a more salutary effect upon them than the living voice of the prophet ever had. W.

12, 13. But these great blessings can come only through prayerfully seeking the face of God and finding mercy before Him. The blessedness of this captivity would lie in its thoroughly uprooting their idolatry, emptying their souls of all self-righteous reliance on the forms of religion, and in casting them only and wholly upon the Lord their God. Thus self-emptied, consciously guilty and needy, they would seek after God. At this point He gave them His promise to hear and to save. Beautifully the Lord expands these cardinal ideas in respect to what constitutes successful seeking: "Ye shall seek and find when ye shall search for Me *with all your heart.*" When they were deeply and solemnly in earnest, when they could think of nothing else, when their whole souls were absorbed in the one supreme desire to find God—then, so seeking, they would surely find. To such seeking God gives His promise, but to no other sort of seeking, to no seeking which enlists but half the heart, to no seeking which but slightly moves the sensibility, or which inspires effort only now and then, spasmodically. The illustrations given to the same point by our Divine Lord in such cases as blind Bartimeus, the Syrophenician woman, and the prodigal son, develop the same quenchless zeal, the same determined purpose, the same intense, all-absorbing interest and devotion. Precisely this is searching for the Lord *with all the heart.* It is the only way of seeking God so as to find Him. God has a right to demand both honesty and sincerity; and He does. He has a right to suspend the blessings of His mercy upon this sole condition, that they shall be sought *with all the heart.* He does so. H. C.

12. Ye shall call upon Me, ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. The Lord's ear is inclined to hear the prayer of the godly. He

takes it well that they offer it up as due worship to Him; that they desire thus to serve Him. He accepts of those offerings graciously, passes by the imperfections in them, and hath regard to their sincere intention and desire. It pleases Him well, that they delight in prayer as converse with Him; that they love to be much with Him, to speak to Him often, and still aspire by this way to more acquaintance with Him. He willingly hears their prayers as the expressions of their necessities and

desires, being both rich and bountiful; He loves to have blessings drawn out of His hands that way. *Leighton.*

Genuine prayer is passing by and putting aside all legal and official conceptions of God, and coming face to face with Him as Father, Friend and Helper. It does not leave out of thought the conception of His kingdom, the holy and beneficent order of His universe. It cries out for it. But it begins with His name, His personality. It takes the gifts that that order brings as the daily bread from a Father's hand. It cries for His forgiveness of the sins which have come between us and Him, and pleads to that end that we have been forgiving and loving toward our brethren. It cries for His wise guidance through a world of temptations, where every step we take seems to be determined by inevitable law. S. S. T.

Prayer is the expression of our wants to God as our Father. Too many pray as criminals deprecating the wrath of a judge, instead of praying as children asking the blessing of our Father who is in heaven. The first model prayer taught us is, "Our Father which art in heaven;" and the less of deprecation and the more filial confidence in our prayers, the more we exhibit the characteristic spirit of the Gospel of Christ. But when all is deep and earnest deprecation of wrath, without one single expression of filial trust, such a litany or prayer sounds more like the wail of despair than the hopeful cry of the still beloved, though long a prodigal son, seeking bread from his father's stores, and a shelter under his father's roof-tree. For what did the prodigal say, at his greatest distance from home, in the depth and bitterness of his worst estrangement? "I will arise and go to my father." That was the last lingering tie or link within him, and that thought thrilled, in blessed vibrations, through his soul, awakened in his lonely heart all the music of the blessed, and made him arise, and with delighted hopes go to his father, and seek—what he found there—a blessing, and bread, and a joyous welcome. *Cumming.*

What is prayer for? Not to inform God nor to move Him, unwilling, to have mercy, as if, like some proud prince, He required a certain amount of recognition of His greatness as the price of His favors. But to fit our own hearts by conscious need, and true desire and dependence, to receive the gifts which He is ever willing to give, but we are not always fit to receive. As Augustine has it, the empty vessel is by prayer carried to the full fountain. A. M.

As faith is the one great *principle* of the spiritual life, so is prayer its one great *exercise*. And though prayer is a very simple thing, and it is perfectly easy to grasp the idea of going to God for what we want, and telling out before Him the desires of our hearts, all experience teaches that prayer—at all events, stated and continuous prayer—is very difficult to practise. The true policy in spiritual things *always* is to endeavor, and to go on endeavoring, after that which we feel quite unequal to do. Where you cannot pray as you wish, pray at all events as you can, and make more vigorous endeavor. If you are troubled and rebuffed by distractions in your prayer, pray on; “stretch forth thy hand” at the gate of mercy, till something is put into it from above. E. M. G.

The pattern of prayer taught by Christ teaches that true prayer is a child's voice to its Father; that it puts God's glory first and ourselves second; that the deepest desire should be for the hallowing in men's hearts and thoughts of the revealed character of God, which will bring His kingdom; that, for ourselves, our outward wants should be the lowest subject of prayer, and our desires be limited within modest compass; that forgiveness is our universal and daily need, and cannot be given to the unmerciful; and that, after pardon, we ever need guarding, lest we fall. A. M.

“No answer to prayer” must ever be written over the petitions of all who, having asked, expect that all is done. Even if the thing asked is all and altogether beyond the range of what we ourselves could bring about, nevertheless we may have an all-important part in the answering of our requests. No one can tell what little thing, wrought in answering obedience to God's call, may fashion itself into the events that are to combine in unity to make our answered prayer, or that may fit us for the reception of the answer. For it is as true that we need the preparation for the answer to our prayers as it is that we need to pray at all. All praying has a place, a most real place, in the economy of God, as He shapes us after His image and likeness as the clay is fashioned by the hands of the potter. Perhaps it is here that more prayers are awaiting an answer, and so are at present unanswered for individual souls, than almost anywhere else; for the preparation within for the answer, and the moving out which has in it the willingness to do all that God gives us to do, to make the answer to the prayer easy and present and practically possible. It may be that God is

going to heal with a word, but it is much more likely that He will call upon us in all natural and spiritual ways to have some part in the healing, and men must not complain that prayer is not answered who are not up and about the work God appoints for them. One way and only one makes possible no prayers unanswered, that we seek only God, God Himself; then everywhere, on the right hand and the left, on sea or land, we can never miss the answer to all our desire, for God is in all places, and neither height, nor depth, nor any other creature can separate us from His love in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Anon.*

13. Ye shall seek Me and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.

Religious character is more than mere natural character, and different from it, as what we are by constitution is different from what we do, and practically seek, and freely become. It is that which lies in choice, and for which we are thus responsible. It is made by what the soul's liberty goes after with a reigning devotion, what it chooses and lives for as its end. If the man, therefore, lives for himself or for the world, as all men do in the way of sin, he is without God, without religious character, and is all the more guilty in it that his nature is feeling after God in throes of disappointed longing. A man is never in religious character till he has found God; and he will never find Him till his whole voluntary nature goes after Him, and chimes with Him in His principles and ends. Whatever ends he has had of his own must be given up as being his own, and God's must be enthroned in him by a supreme devotion. “Ye shall seek for Me and find Me, if ye search for Me with all your heart.” *Bushnell.*

In seeking God, we must search for Him, accomplish a diligent search, search for directions in seeking Him and encouragements to our faith and hope. We must continue seeking, and take pains in seeking as those that search; and this we must do with our heart, in sincerity and uprightness, and with our whole heart, with vigor and fervency, putting forth all that is within us in prayer; those who thus seek God shall find Him, and shall find Him their bountiful Rewarder (Heb. 11:6). He never said to such, *Seek ye Me in vain.* H.

Our lives are determined by our practical theology, our working knowledge of or our common feeling about God. The life is never better than the heart's secret thought of God. True love makes straight paths from heart to heart. Who truly loves must seek, as the nec-

dle does the magnet point. "And ye shall find Me." Ah, what a discovery is that! Men count those fortunate who discover a gold-mine, who discover a continent, who discover a law in nature, who discover a new star calmly sweeping through space—but what is that to him who discovers God! *Interior.*

God must have the heart or nothing, and have its direct loyalty and love, or none that is accepted. He looks in to see which way the inmost spirit kneels—and not Sunday only, but all days—whether toward the Father of Righteousness or some idol of the popular admiration. He lifts the folds that are plaited so cunningly over our inmost selves, and judges what that inner rule is by which we refuse or accept bribes from the hand of man or woman, by which we do or scorn to do an unclean deed. So that, in reality, the difference between seeking God and seeking Him not is something more than a relative or comparative difference. It is absolute and decisive. It supposes a distinct centre of attraction, and so another sort of life; what the New Testament calls a "new man." F. D. H.

He seeks us before we seek Him. Our search is the response of our hearts to His invitation (Ps. 27:8). But this search must be made. The promise of finding is attached to the condition of seeking (Matt. 7:7). The prodigal must return to his father before he can receive the welcome home. Men are waiting for God to visit them, reveal Himself to them, do something that will bring them back to Him. They may wait forever and in vain. God is waiting for us. It is our part to arise and seek Him. This search must be with *all the heart*. The reason why we are disappointed of the answers of our prayers is often that our prayers are so insincere, so cold, so half-hearted. It is reasonable to expect God, the all-seeing, to answer our prayers, not according to the vigor of the language, but according to the fervency of our desires. If we value the knowledge and communion of God aright, we shall seek Him with all the heart; with the heart—*i.e.*, sincerely, spiritually, inwardly, not with mere formal inquiries; and with the whole heart—*i.e.*, with singleness of purpose, intensity, earnestness. "Blessed are they that seek God with all the heart, for they shall find Him;" that is enough for a perfect beatitude. To find God is to find our light, our rest, our home. To know Him is life eternal; to commune with Him is the joy of heaven. *Adeney.*

15. *Because ye have said.* The Septuagint properly inserts this verse between the *twenti-*

eth and the *twenty-first*, and thus the *connection* here is not disturbed, and the connection below completed. A. C.

20-23. From general remarks about the false prophets, Jeremiah here becomes specific; names two of these false prophets, probably the leaders; details their case and announces their terrible doom. When people wished to imprecate the direst curses on the worst of men, they might say, "The Lord make thee like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king roasted in the fire." Their crimes included both the most flagrant immoralities and the most shocking blasphemy in their work as false prophets. H. C.

20. *Hear ye therefore the word.* Dr. Blayney thinks there were *two letters* written by the prophet to the captives in Babylon, and that the *first* ends with this verse. That having heard, on the return of the embassy (Elasah and Gemariah, whom Zedekiah had sent to Babylon, and to whom the prophet entrusted the above letter—verse 3), that the captives had not received his advices favorably, because they were deceived by false prophets among them, who promised them a speedier deliverance, he therefore wrote a *second letter*, beginning with the *fifteenth* verse, and going on with the *twenty-first*, etc., in which he denounces God's judgments on three of the chief of those—Ahab, Zedekiah and Shemaiah.

21. *He shall slay them before your eyes.* Nebuchadnezzar would be led by political reasons to punish these pretended prophets, as their predictions tended to make his Israelitish subjects uneasy and disaffected; and might excite them to rebellion. He therefore slew them; two of them it appears he *burned alive*—*viz.*, Ahab and Zedekiah. *Burning alive* was a Chaldean punishment (Dan. 3:6; Amos 2:1). From them other nations borrowed it. A. C.

24. *Speak to Shemaiah.* Zephaniah was the *second priest, sagan*, or chief priest's deputy; and Seraiah, high-priest, when Jerusalem was taken. (See chap. 52:24.) Shemaiah directs his letter to the former, and tells him that God had appointed him to supply the place of the high-priest, who was probably then absent. His name was either Azariah, or Seraiah, his son, but called Jehoiada from the remarkable zeal and courage of that pontiff. (See the passages in the margin.) *Dodd.*

24-29. Another of those false prophets among the captives at Babylon, Shemaiah by name, did not like the command sent out by the hand of Jeremiah, "Build ye houses and make yourselves homes and families there in

Babylon." So he wrote back to Jerusalem to all the people there, especially addressing Zephaniah, the priest, reminding him of his responsibilities and of his duty to suppress such mad fellows as the Lord's true prophets by imprisonment and the stocks. He especially named Jeremiah of Anathoth, who he said was assuming to be a prophet of the Lord among them. The reader will note the contemptuous tone of his description of the Lord's true prophets, "For every man that is mad, and that maketh himself a prophet." On receiving this letter, Zephaniah read it to the prophet Jeremiah. H. C.—God's faithful prophets are here represented as prophets of their own making, usurpers of the office, and lay intruders, and as men that were mad, actuated by some demon, and not divinely inspired; or as distracted men, and men in a frenzy. Thus the characters of the false prophets are thrown upon the true ones. If this had been indeed their character, they

ought to be bound as madmen and punished as pretenders, and therefore he concludes that Jeremiah must be so done to. He does not bid them examine whether Jeremiah could produce any proofs of his mission, and could make it to appear that he was not mad. H.

30-32. Hereupon the Lord gives Jeremiah a special message for this Shemaiah, which is sent to all the captives—a terrible warning to them all to beware how they encouraged the false prophets, how they implicated themselves in their wickedness, or in anywise gave heed to their falsehoods. It also denounced upon him the utter extermination of his family. God will punish him and his posterity. Thus this chapter affords yet other illustrations of the bold and daring impiety of the false prophets; of the pernicious and widespread results of their influence, and of the fearfully stringent measures which became necessary to eradicate this evil. H. C.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTER XXX.

- 30:1, 2** THE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD, the God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book. For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will turn again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.
- 3** And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah.
- 4** For thus saith the LORD: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.
- 5** Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child: wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?
- 6** Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bands; and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: but they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be quiet and at ease, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, but I will not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee with judgement, and will in no wise leave thee unpunished.
- 12, 13** For thus saith the LORD, Thy hurt is incurable, and thy wound grievous. There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines.
- 14** All thy lovers have forgotten thee; they seek thee not: for I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one; for the greatness of thine iniquity,
- 15** because thy sins were increased. Why criest thou for thy hurt? thy pain is incurable: for the greatness of thine iniquity, because thy sins were increased, I have done these things

16 unto thee. Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey. For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they have called thee an outcast, *saying*, It is Zion, whom no man seeketh after. Thus saith the LORD: Behold, I will turn again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have compassion on his dwelling places; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them. And their prince shall be of themselves, and their ruler shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is he that hath had boldness to approach unto me? saith the LORD. And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. Behold, the tempest of the LORD, *even his* fury, is gone forth, a sweeping tempest: it shall burst upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall understand it.

Chap. 30. This chapter and the next are in the same strain, and must be assumed to bear the same date. They manifestly contemplate the Captivity as fully begun, and were written for the reading and the comfort of the exiles already in their foreign land. For it should be noted that this is not a message to be pronounced orally to the people, but it is to be written in a book, so that it may be sent to the exiles as in the case of the letters contained in chap. 29. Thus written for the people in their captivity, its tone is mainly one of promise and of rich encouragement. H. C.

This undated prophecy may not be unreasonably presumed to have followed immediately after the preceding one, in which the restoration of the people from the Babylonish captivity is in direct terms foretold. From hence the transition is natural and easy to the more glorious and general restoration that was to take place in a more distant period, and was designed for the ultimate object of the national hopes and expectations. Both events are frequently thus connected together in the prophetic writings, and perhaps with this design, that when that which was nearest at hand should be accomplished it might afford the strongest and most satisfactory kind of evidence that the latter, how remote soever its period, would in like manner be brought about by the interposition of Providence in its due season. *Blayney.*

1-3. Verse 2 raises the question, How much is comprised in "all the words I have spoken to thee"? Verse 4 seems designed to answer the question and to suggest the limitation—viz., to these words which follow in this im-

mediate connection, including this chapter and probably the next (31). Hence it does not include all that we now have in the Book of Jeremiah. At another time he was directed to write out all his prophecies. (See chap. 36:2.) Verse 3 gives the key-note of this chapter and the next—the great elementary promise of restoration from the captivity to their own land. This would be naturally addressed to the exiles. H. C.

3. *I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah.* Israel and Judah having been carried away by two distinct captivities, into different parts of the world, several prophecies of the Old Testament not only foretell the restoration of each of them, but likewise their reunion after their restoration. (See Ezek. 37:6-22; Hos. 1:11.) *W. Lowth.*

The present physical, moral, and social condition of the Jews must be a miracle. We can come to no other conclusion. Had they continued from the commencement of the Christian era down to the present hour in some such national state in which we find the Chinese, walled off from the rest of the human family, and by their selfishness on a national scale, and their repulsions of alien elements, resisting every assault from without in the shape of hostile invasion, and from an overpowering national pride, forbidding the introduction of new and foreign customs, we should not see so much mystery interwoven with their existence. But this is not their state—far from it. They are neither a united and independent nation, nor a parasitic province. They are peeled, and scattered, and crumbled into fragments, but, like the broken globules of quicksilver, instinct

with a cohesive power, ever ready to amalgamate. Geography, arms, genius, politics, and foreign help do not explain their existence; time and climate and customs equally fail to unravel it. None of these are or can be the springs of their perpetuity. They have been spread over every part of the habitable globe; they have lived under the *régime* of every dynasty; they have shared the protection of just laws, the proscriptions of cruel ones, and witnessed the rise and progress of both; they have used every tongue, and have lived in every latitude. The snows of Lapland have chilled, and the suns of Africa scorched them. They have drunk the Tiber, the Thames, the Jordan, the Mississippi. In every century, and every degree of latitude and longitude, we find a Jew. It is not so with any other race. Empires the most illustrious have fallen, and buried the men that constructed them; but the Jew has lived among the ruins, a living monument of indestructibility. Persecution has unsheathed the sword and lighted the fagot. Papal superstition and Moslem barbarism have smote with unsparing ferocity; penal rescripts and deep prejudice have visited on them the most unrighteous chastisement, and notwithstanding all, they survive.

Like their own bush on Mount Horeb, Israel has continued in the flames, but unconsumed. They are the aristocracy of Scripture, bereft of their coronets—princes in degradation. A Babylonian, a Theban, a Spartan, an Athenian, are names known in history only; their shadows alone haunt the world and flicker on its tablets. A Jew walks every street, dwells in every capital, traverses every exchange, and relieves the monotony of the nations of the earth. The race has inherited the heirloom of immortality, incapable of extinction or amalgamation. Like streamlets from a common head, and composed of waters of a peculiar nature, they have flowed along every stream, without blending with it, or receiving its color or its flavor, and traversed the surface of the globe, to the close of the many centuries, peculiar, distinct, alone. The Jewish race at this day is the most striking seal of the truth of the Sacred Oracles. There is no possibility of accounting for their perpetual isolation, their depressed but distinct being on any grounds save those revealed in the records of truth. Their aggregate and individual character is as remarkable as their circumstances. Meanness the most abject and pride the most overbearing—the degradation of helots, and yet a conscious and a manifest sense of the dig-

nity of a royal priesthood; looking back along many thousand years to ancestry beside which that of our peers and princes is but of yesterday; regarding justly Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as their great progenitors, and pressing forward on the wings of faith, and hope, and promise to a long-expected day when they, now kings and princes in disguise, shall become so indeed by a manifestation the most glorious and a dispensation the most sublime. The people are a perpetual miracle—a living echo of heaven's holy tones, prolonged from generation to generation. *Fraser's Magazine.*

I behold the unconverted Gentiles barring the path to the cross for the sons of Israel, and I can understand the strange logic of the Epistle to the Romans, that only when the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in will the hardness of Israel give way. They have been scattered to the ends of the earth; they have been ground between the millstones of race prejudices; but they have maintained their lineage and blood, and they have never ceased to be proud of their traditions. The future has its mission for them, but our hands must break the bars, and beat down the gates that have hitherto kept them back. Even in their exile, they are "beloved for the fathers' sakes," and their conversion can be nothing less than "life from the dead," the herald of the millennial reign. *Behrends.*

4-7. This passage contemplates the exile, with its antecedents, as "the day of Jacob's trouble," and has for its special object to say, "Yet he shall be saved out of it." II. C.

7. *Alas! for that day is great.* The word *day* often comprehends a succession of time, in which a whole series of events is transacted; so it here contains the whole time of the siege and taking of Jerusalem, the destruction of the city and Temple, and the carrying away the people captive. This is described as a time of great tribulation, in which it was an earnest of the day of judgment, called the great and terrible day of the Lord (Joel 2:31). *W. Louth.*

8. "In that day" is not precisely the time of Jacob's trouble, said in verse 7 to be great, but is rather the day in which he shall be saved out of that trouble.

9. The Jews shall serve, not the king of Babylon, but the royal son of David, their own King Messiah. This would be really serving the Lord their God, both because this King Messiah is Himself God, and because He receives His kingdom from the Father. Both modes of expression are used in the Scriptures. According to His oft-repeated promise, the Lord

will raise up this glorious king for them in His own due time. (See the same phraseology, Hos. 3 : 5 ; Ezek. 34 : 23, 24 ; 37 : 24, and the same essential ideas in 2 Sam. 7 : 12-16 ; Ps. 2 : 6-8 ; 89 : 19-37.)

10. That Jacob and Israel are grouped together in this promise looks to the restoration of the true Israel, without respect to the revolt and separation into two kingdoms. We should quite miss the sense of this promise if we were to restrict it to the restoration of the Ten Tribes in the literal sense from their Assyrian exile.

11. Those nations, Assyria and Chaldea, that once scattered and enslaved the Hebrew people have long since become extinct. But God's ancient people still exist, and, what is more, the true Israel has already grown so as to pervade the great civilized nations of the world with the name of Christ. H. C.

Though I make a full end of all nations, yet will I not make a full end of thee. We have here ocular proof of prophecy accomplished in an instance without a parallel. It was repeatedly foretold, both in the Old and New Testament, that, for the rejection and murder of their Messiah, the Jews should be dispersed into all countries ; yet that they should not be swallowed up and lost among their conquerors, but should still subsist to latest times a distinct people. By Jeremiah God declared, "He would make an end of the nations," their oppressors, "but He would not make an end of them." It cannot be said this prediction was written since the event ; and certainly an occurrence more singular or improbable could not have been predicted. In the course of human affairs, who hath heard such a thing ? Yet so it is. The mighty monarchies of Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome are vanished like the shadows of the evening or the phantoms of the night. Their places know them no more. Nothing remains of them but their names ; while this little despised people, strangely secure, without a friend or protector amid the wreck of empires, oppressed, persecuted, harassed always, by edicts and executors, by murders and massacres, hath outlived the very ruins of them all. "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." Behold then a sign and a wonder ; the accomplishment of prophecy in a standing miracle. Contemplate the sight as it deserves ; and be not faithless, but believing. *Bp. Horne.*

14, 15. In even a cursory review of it, one is struck with the boldness with which the Bible claims *the infliction of sorrow as the intentional work of God.* We find no adroit hiding

of the Divine hand, no obtrusion of second causes to relieve its stern, often its appalling procedures. It is the way of science to evade the name of God. The way of revelation is to proclaim and exult in it, even when the deed done makes the ears of men tingle at its tragic story. *Phelps.*

16. *All that prey upon thee will I give for a prey.* The Assyrians were destroyed by the Babylonians ; the Babylonians by the Medes and Persians ; the Egyptians and Persians were destroyed by the Greeks, under Alexander. All these nations are now extinct ; but the Jews, as a distinct people, still exist. A. C.

16, 17. The logical connection indicated by "therefore" is this : Because thy case is desperate, past all help from thyself, and because thy lovers—the heathen whose friendship thou wert seeking, and whose gods thou wert serving—all fail thee, I will Myself undertake for thee—will devour those that devoured thee, will drive into exile those who have exiled thee, and spoil those that have spoiled thee. But unto thee will I restore health in place of thy sickness, and healing in place of thy wounds, moved to this by jealousy for mine own great name, because the nations have taunted thee as an outcast, and called thee "that Zion for whom no man cares." H. C.

17. *I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord.* The words that were spoken by Jeremiah to console the hearts of Israel had a deeper significance for the Israel of all ages. The ministers of Christ stand forth with a heaven-sent commission to restore ; it is the leading character of all their teaching. It is even felt to be so by those who reject it. And I know no more melancholy contemplation than is afforded by the sight of the numbers who, feeling the necessity, and even believing the reality, of this restoring efficacy, support with all their hearts and souls the existence of the Christian churches, that are formed to minister to its operations ; acknowledge in all their words, and in many of their actions, the beauty and perfectness of our doctrine, as distinguished from all other kinds of moral instruction ; contend for it earnestly in conversation, public and private ; declare unreservedly for church-teaching in preference to all other teaching ; and yet—as if no churches existed—as if no real change had come upon the spirit of things by the preaching of Olivet and the death of Calvary—live and move, devoted Christians—without Christianity ! W. A. B.

18, 19. The promise of restoration is here renewed in slightly differing phrase, but in the same general sense. "Captivity," as usual, in

the sense of captives. The city shall be rebuilt on her original hill, although this word rendered "heap" may mean pile of ruins. "Hill" is its better established and more usual sense. In the remote future, and through the spiritual fulfilment of these precious promises, the city of God shall be immensely enlarged, beautified, and glorified. Externally considered, the restored Temple and city under Zerubbabel, and perhaps even under Herod the Great, never reached its magnificence in the days of Solomon. The joy and peace of the restored people in the days of Zerubbabel, and of the prophet Zechariah, were memorable rather as a token and pledge of Messianic times and blessings, than as being in themselves very great, either absolutely or relatively to the times of David and Solomon. When we cannot find an adequate fulfilment for a prophecy like this in its external and literal application, we are certainly justified in assuming its outlook onward to the better, brighter days of King Messiah, and especially so when, as here, this King Messiah is manifestly present to the prophet's thought. (See verse 9.) This view of the passage before us is supported by various parallel passages, in which the multiplying and glorifying of the future Israel stands among the prominent features of Messianic prophecy. (Cf. Ezek. 37 : 26 ; 36 : 37, 38, and Zech. 10 : 8-10.) H. C.

21. The immediate reference is to Zerubbabel and the elders who returned from the Captivity ; but there is a larger significance than any merely human personage could exhaust or satisfactorily correspond to. There can be no doubt as to the Messianic character of this promise. But it is precisely the vagueness of the reference, the primary uncertainty as to who it was to be in whom all the hope of Israel was to be realized, that constituted the moral force of the prediction. In Israel was the secular government to be identified with and crowned by the moral and spiritual ; but to the very last was it kept in reserve as to whether or not the kingdom thus foretold was to be of this world. Jesus Christ had Himself to declare the real essence and nature of His kingdom. He constituted the ideal Ruler of Israel in His relation to His subjects. *He was to be of the same kindred.* A stronger guarantee of the Divine favor could not be given. No foreigner was to hold permanent sway over the Israel of God. In one of themselves the holy people would find a legitimate centre for loyal attachment and patriotic devotion. That from their own midst their Prince should spring was proof that their independence, liberty and national

individuality should be preserved. He would therefore represent its honor, and secure for himself the strongest personal attachment. The hopes of the race would be embodied in such a personage, who would vitally perpetuate its glory. *He was to be allied to them in their experience and sympathies.* As their fellow-countryman he will understand their aims and aspirations. By the vicissitudes of their fortune his sympathies will be drawn forth, and he will share the enthusiasm of their future. In Jesus Christ these conditions were fulfilled. M.

He shall approach unto Me. The words admit of being applied, with the greatest propriety, to the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophecy contained in the thirtieth and thirty-first chapters looks forward to Gospel times, and has an ultimate respect to the final restoration of the Jews, and their conversion to the Messiah, of whom Zerubbabel was an illustrious type. The prophet, foreseeing the coming of the Messiah, and desecrating His character, spake with an air of surprise : "And who is He that hath boldness to approach unto Me ?" None ever approached unto God so nearly, or under the same character, as He did. He, considered as man, was taken into an intimate personal union with the Deity, so as to become Immanuel, or "God with us ;" and He approached to God, in the office of Mediator, to make peace between the offended Majesty of Heaven and His sinful creatures. R. Hall.

22. "Ye shall be My people, and I will be your God," is the crowning promise, full of richest significance, most compactly expressed. They shall meet all the relations of a people peculiarly the Lord's. He will be everything to them that a God can be or need be. What can be better than this ?

23, 24. With only slight variations these words occurred (chap. 23 : 19, 20). There they looked to the judgments of God brought on the land and cities of Judah for their sins through the agency of the Chaldeans. Here they must be taken in the same sense and with the same application. In this view they are parallel to verses 5-7, and are introduced here for their moral bearing on the hearts of the exiles, who amid the richest promises of mercy must not forget how terrible God's judgments have been upon their countrymen for their great sins against Him. The last clause, "In the latter days ye shall consider it," intimates the reason for introducing these verses here. It is wholesome and well to think of those fearful judgments even in the latter days of promise and hope. H. C.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTER XXXI.

31 : 1 At that time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. Thus saith the LORD, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness ; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. The LORD appeared of old unto me, *saying*, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love : therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Again will I build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel : again shalt thou be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry. Again shalt thou plant vineyards upon the mountains of Samaria : the planters shall plant, and shall enjoy *the fruit thereof*. For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the hills of Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God. For thus saith the LORD, Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout for the chief of the nations : publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the uttermost parts of the earth, *and* with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together : a great company shall they return hither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them : I will cause them to walk by rivers of waters, in a straight way wherein they shall not stumble : for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off ; and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the LORD hath ransomed Jacob, and redeemed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. And they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together unto the goodness of the LORD, to the corn, and to the wine, and to the oil, and to the young of the flock and of the herd : and their soul shall be as a watered garden ; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old together : for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD.

Thus saith the LORD : A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children ; she refuseth to be comforted for her children, because they are not. Thus saith the LORD : Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears : for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD ; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope for thy latter end, saith the LORD ; and *thy* children shall come again to their own border. I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself *thus*, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a calf unaccustomed to the yoke : turn thou me, and I shall be turned ; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented ; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh : I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son ? is he a pleasant child ? for as often as I speak against him, I do earnestly remember him still : therefore my bowels are troubled for him ; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD.

Set thee up waymarks, make thee guide-posts : set thine heart toward the high way, even the way by which thou wentest : turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities. How long wilt thou go hither and thither, O thou backsliding daughter ? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall encompass a man.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel : Yet again shall they use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity : The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, O mountain of holiness. And Judah and all the cities thereof shall dwell therein together ; the husbandmen, and they that go about with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and every sorrowful soul have I replenished. Upon this I awaked, and beheld ; and my sleep was sweet unto me. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the

28 seed of man, and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have
 29 afflict; so will I watch over them to build and to plant, saith the LORD. In those days they
 shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on
 30 edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grapes,
 his teeth shall be set on edge.

31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of
 32 Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their
 fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt;
 which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD.
 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the
 LORD; I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will
 34 be their God, and they shall be my people: and they shall teach no more every man his
 neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me,
 from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their
 35 iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more. Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the
 sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night,
 36 which stirreth up the sea, that the waves thereof roar; the LORD of hosts is his name: If
 these ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall
 37 cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD: If heaven above can be
 measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast
 38 off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD. Behold, the
 days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD from the tower
 39 of Hananel unto the gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall yet go out
 40 straight onward unto the hill Gareb, and shall turn about unto Goah. And the whole
 valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook Kidron,
 unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, shall be holy unto the LORD; it shall not
 be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever

Chap. 31. This chapter continues the same subject, freshly glowing with promise and hope for the exiles. Remarkably the discourse is of Israel and Ephraim throughout verses 1-22. (See verses 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 18, 21); and then of Judah (verses 23-26), and finally of both Israel and Judah jointly (verses 27-40). This fact I take not as a prediction of the literal restoration of the Ten Tribes to Canaan, which would be all too little for promises so great, and withal would quite miss the Messianic tone and bearing of this entire portion (chaps. 30 and 31), but the fact should be taken as an index of the great depth of God's love and of the wealth of His purposed blessings for the kingdom of His anointed. H. C.

2-40. The second part of this prophecy begins (chap. 31:2), and is marked by a sudden transition to a distant period of time, represented in a vision, and embellished with a variety of beautiful scenes and images. God announces the renewal of His ancient love for Israel, and promises, in consequence thereof, a speedy restoration of their former privileges and happiness (verses 2-5). Already the heralds have proclaimed on Mount Ephraim the arrival of the joyful day: they summon the

people to reassemble once more in Zion, and promulge by special command the glad tidings of salvation which God had accomplished for them. God Himself declares His readiness to conduct home the remnant of Israel from all parts of their dispersion, to compassionate and relieve their infirmities and to provide them with all necessary accommodations by the way (verses 6-9). The news is carried into distant lands, and the nations are summoned to attend to the display of God's power and goodness in rescuing His people from their stronger enemies, and in supplying them after their return with all manner of good things to the full extent of their wants and desires (verses 10-14). Here the scene changes, and two new personages are successively introduced, in order to diversify the same subject and to impress it more strongly. Rachel first, who is represented as just risen from the grave, and bitterly bewailing the loss of her children; for whom she looks about her in vain, but none are to be seen. Her tears are dried up, and she is consoled with the assurance that they are not lost forever, but shall in time be brought back to their ancient borders (verses 15-17). Ephraim comes next. He laments his past undutiful

ness with great contrition and penitence, and professes an earnest desire of amendment. These symptoms of returning duty are no sooner discerned in him than God acknowledges him once more as a darling child, and resolves with mercy to receive him (verses 18-20). The virgin of Israel is then earnestly exhorted to hasten the preparations for her return, and encouraged with having the prospect of a signal miracle wrought in her favor (verses 21, 22). And the vision closes at last with a promise that the Divine blessing should again rest upon the land of Judah, and that the men of Judah should once more dwell there, cultivating it according to the simplicity of ancient institutions, and fully discharged from every want (verses 23-26). In the third part, by way of appendix to the vision, the following gracious promises are specifically annexed: that God would in time to come supply all the deficiencies of Israel and Judah, and would be as diligent to restore as He had ever been to destroy them, and would not any more visit the offences of the fathers upon the children (verses 27-30). That He would make with them a better covenant than He had made with their forefathers (verses 31-34). That they should continue His people by an ordinance as firm and as lasting as that of the heavens (verses 35-37). And that Jerusalem should again be built, enlarged in its extent and secure from future desolation (verses 33-40). *Blayney.*

1. The God of all the families.

Amid all the vicissitudes of nations and governments, the institution of the family has been perpetuated. Moral and spiritual forces travel along this road rather than any other. It is God's great highway for those principles which, when fully embraced by men's hearts, shall bring in the kingdom of God itself. And it is by the natural increase of the family that God designs His truth should spread and His way come to be known upon earth, and His saving health among all nations. But ere this be accomplished the family will have developed into the Church. When one and another household are possessed of a common spirit, share a common faith and hope and render obedience to one Divine law, it is in accordance with all spiritual instincts that these should meet together for their mutual comfort, edification and support. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." And such holy convocations have reacted on the family, and, deepening the hold of those sacred principles which first drew the members of the

Church together, have made more firm the faith and hope which already existed. Thus by the Church the spirit of the family is not only preserved, but strengthened, and its perpetuation and reproduction made more certain in the future. And the process goes on. Divine principles, faith in God, fear and love of His name, established in the family, expand and develop into the church, and there slowly, with ever accelerating force, surely and irresistibly they make their way until at length it will be seen that the godly seed has the start of the seed of the wicked one, and is ever pushing it out of the way, driving it forth from its long-held but usurped dominion. In illustration of this see how the Christian races do even now inherit the earth. "The character of the family lies at the very foundation of all permanent moral improvement in the human race generally, and in Christian churches in particular; and until it be intelligently and, under the influence of right principles, practically attended to, all the preaching and all the religious machinery with which we are furnished will fail, as they have hitherto failed, to improve materially the moral condition of the world." C.

2. *In the wilderness.* Though God, on the passage of the Israelites from Egypt, cut off many of them by the sword for their iniquities—some by the Amalekites, some by the hands of their brethren—yet the survivors found grace and were conducted by Him into the land of rest. God here parallels His future gracious purposes with His former merciful providences. *Poole.*—Through the great wilderness that lay between their country and Babylon the Lord led those captives, conducting them to a peaceful repose in Chaldaea, and watching over them for good, till in due time He could bring them home again. It is no great evil to go into a wilderness, provided only that the Lord leads you, and leads from a state of sinning and turmoil to a state of peace and rest. H. C.—The afflictions of the present may not only be the punishment for past transgressions, but much more—a preparation for future blessedness and usefulness, a grace in germ if not in formation. In the case of the Church they may bring back to a study of the title-deeds of faith; in that of the individual they may promote humility, heart-searching and efforts to amend. However hard to bear, they should be endured as a grace preparing for grace. M.

3. The people are introduced as speaking here, and they cite the words of the Lord. The

word rendered "of old" usually refers to place, and means *from afar*; but can be used of *time*, as our translation has it here. The sense of place would not be bad. The Lord appeared in the remote distance as one repelled and withdrawn because of my sins; yet He reveals Himself from afar with these precious words, affirming His enduring love. H. C.

I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. The Bible is constantly advancing from the domain of threatening and outward promise to that of free and unselfish love. Its strength of appeal from the very beginning lies in the mercy of God pardoning unconditionally—a mercy which, when the clouds are severed, is seen to be the face of the son of God, and the Man of Sorrows devoting Himself for those who had no claim on Him but that of guilt and misery. He comes from a throne to a cross for them, and we see written on it, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us." This love comes from a Divine fountain through a human heart, that human hearts may feel the responsive throb, "We love Him who first loved us." *Ker.*

God loves with an everlasting love. He loves Israel, not only in the days of prosperity and wealth and beauty, but in the days of downfall and despair. His thought penetrates through to the abiding worth of humanity. We do not slander human affection, or in any way underestimate it, when we say that man cannot love his fellow-man as God loves him. God it is who first of all shows man what love really is. Y.—It is wonderful that God should ever love such unworthy creatures as we are, but it is "passing strange" that He should not cease to love us after all our provocations of His wrath, that He should love us with "an everlasting love," and should "have continued His loving-kindness unto" us. *Adeney.*

If the Lord have "drawn you with loving-kindness," it is because He hath "loved you with an everlasting love." This grace of God is no purpose of yesterday, which may change with the perpetual changes of which you are conscious, and which rob you of your peace and joy. It was laid up for you from eternity with God. Then His heart was toward you before creation started into being. Then it was His plan to bring you to Himself. Then your Divine Surety pledged Himself to all that was necessary for your redemption, and the blessed Spirit of God engaged to perfect this grace in you till you were ripe for glory. No ages

have altered this everlasting design of God; no multitude of counsels have diverted His thoughts from its accomplishment; no aggravated offences have caused Him to repent of His purpose. His eye saw you when as yet you were not; His providence has brought you into being; and His grace, beginning in eternity, has brought you into *second* being, and will presently issue in never-ending blessedness and glory, in the immediate vision of your God. *Goode.*

Love may have many objects, but it must select them one by one. Love affects not masses, but individuals; not humanity, but men. "Jesus loves *me*," truly sings the child. "Who loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*," justly says Paul. The human heart demands the element of personal choice. The sinner needs to know and feel that God's love is fixed on him. This means personal selection. Redemption without this feature could not proceed from love; love refuses to work by any other process. *Occident.*—Salvation is personal. It is a relation constituted by God's love for an individual, and that individual's love for God. It finds expression in personal communion. "He is mine and I am His." It involves personal choice. All this is clear in thought, and it is the sole basis of the Christian's joy and peace in God. But the source of this definite love is the Divine nature. God would be love if there were not an intelligence in the universe beside Himself. He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish. He is quick to hear and sure to save all who will come unto Him in the only way that can be taken without trampling upon His own immaculate righteousness. He is not willing that any should perish. *Interior.*

He that loves may be sure that he was loved first; and he that chooses God for his delight and portion may conclude confidently that God hath chosen him to be one of those that shall enjoy Him, and be happy in Him forever; for that our love and electing of Him is but the return and repercussion of the beams of His love shining upon us. *Leighton.*

The greatness of "the love of Christ" appears in the benefits which He bestows. These are such as would never have entered into the conception of created minds. To have sin pardoned, to be set free from eternal death, this is an unspeakable deliverance; but the benefits are not only negative; they are positive in the highest degree. He accepts us, adopts us into His family; He gives His children portions of

His own Spirit in their hearts ; He makes them members of His body, fits them to dwell with Himself in a vast eternity, gives them to rejoice in the hope of the glory to be revealed, purifies them from their defilements, instructs them in heavenly truth, in death sustains their spirits, and after death preserves them in His holy presence for the great day when all shall be united in heaven ! Christ's love, in its duration, extends from eternity to eternity. " I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Before the mountains were brought forth, before the earth and the world were created—then His delights were among the sons of men. This earth exists chiefly as the theatre of this love. Nothing short of having His people to dwell with Himself forever can satisfy His generous and immense benevolence. He cannot be content unless they are where He is. " Father, I will that those whom Thou hast given to Me may be with Me where I am." They partake with Him of His glory, and He says to each at the hour of death, " Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord !" *R. Hall.*

You were upon His heart from eternity ; you are upon His heart this day in heaven ; for you His eternal Son came to the world ; for you He lived, for you He died ; your love to Christ is a reflex of His and His Father's love to you. *Erskine.*

The love of God is changeless and eternal. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the kindness of the Lord shall never depart from any of His children. Let us try to grasp this truth. Then, come what may, joy or sorrow, prosperity or adversity, we shall know always that the love of God abides unchanging—that we are held in its clasp with a hold that never can be severed. *J. R. M.*

That there is one Being in the universe who, with no taint in His ineffable purity, can look down upon this world with mild, pitying, forgiving eyes—this one thought of God in Christ is the conception of Him against which guilt has been contending for six thousand years. The power which conquers guilt is the omnipotence of love. Let it be repeated and reiterated therefore—God is the sinner's friend. Throw open the windows to the light of heaven. Let the glory of God stream in from golden skies ! The whole Godhead is the sinner's friend. " I will rejoice to do them good with my whole heart and with my whole soul." God is never more the sinner's friend than in the very quickening of conscience which he resists. *Phelps.*

The secret of the love of God and of its eter-

nal endurance is to be sought in His nature and in His relations to us. " God is love." He loves because He cannot but love, because He delights to love, because His love must be ever flowing and is so vast that it must needs flow out eternally in all directions. It is not the attraction of the object, but the character of the love, that accounts for its perpetual endurance. *Adeney.*

Love hath for its nature to make itself known and to have itself believed. The infinite love of God to the soul is not satisfied until it pours itself into the consciousness, saying, " I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." There must be a distinct act of the Spirit to carry this home to the individual consciousness. And so many are the doubts and misgivings engendered by indwelling sin, that we need our beloved Saviour to tell us again and again that He is at peace with us and loves us still. The words which He employs for this purpose are the very words which stand recorded in His written testament ; but they are uttered with a new tone of personal love and a voice trembling with individual compassion. *J. W. A.*

The most wonderful thing in the universe is our Saviour's love for His own. Christ bears with all our infirmities. He never tires of our inconsistencies and unfaithfulnesses. He goes on forever forgiving and forgetting. He follows us when we go astray. He does not forget us when we forget Him. Through all our stumbling and sinning, through all our provocation and disobedience, through all our waywardnesses and stubbornnesses, through all our doubting and unfaithfulness, He clings to us still, and never lets us go. Having loved His own, He loves unto the end. *J. R. M.*

The old taunt of His enemies, as they stood beneath His cross, might have been yielded to—" If Thou be the Son of God, come down, and we will believe." I ask why did not He ? The only thing that kept Him there, the only answer to that question is—Because He loved me with an everlasting love, and died to redeem me. Because of that love, He came to earth ; because of that love, He tabernacled among us ; because of that love, He gazed all His life long on the cross of shame ; because of that love, He trod unfaltering, with eager haste and solemn resolve, the rough and painful road ; because of that love, He listened not to the voice that at the beginning tempted Him to win the world for Himself by an easier path ; because of that love, He listened not—though He could have

done it—to the voices that at the end taunted Him with their proffered allegiance if He would come down from the cross; because of that love, He gave up His Spirit. And through all the weariness and contumely and pain, that love held His will fixed to its purpose, and bore Him over every hindrance that barred His path. Many waters quench it not. *That* love is stronger than death; mightier than all opposing powers; deep and great beyond all thought or thankfulness. It silences all praise. It beggars all recompense. To believe it is life. To feel it is heaven. A. M.

“I will draw all men unto Me.” No demonstration of duty, no motive of interest, no portents of hell, no pictures of virtue, can win men to God like a sight of Jesus on His cross and His throne. It is when we see that He first loved us that we love Him, and we delight to serve Him because He so loved us as to give Himself for us. Then it is that the enmity of our minds against God is slain, and the penitent clings to Him like a loving child; then the root of sin, from which the works of the flesh spring with such vigor and plentifulness, is cut, and the soul, grafted into the Living Vine, Christ Jesus, brings forth grateful praise in the spiritual virtues of a Christian life. *Bethune.*

Our safety and security lie not in our weak holding upon Christ, but in Christ's holding us fast in His everlasting arms. This is our glory and our safety, that Christ's *left hand is always under us, and His right hand doth always embrace us.* T. Brooks.

To make Christ's forgiving love our own there must be the personal contact of my soul with the loving heart of Christ, the individual act of my own coming to Him, and, as the old Puritans used to say, “my transacting” with Him. Like the ocean of the atmosphere, His love encompasses me, and in it I live, and move, and have my being. But I must let it flow into my spirit and stir the dormant music of my soul. I can shut it out, sealing my heart love-tight against it. I do shut it out unless by my own conscious, personal act I yield myself to Him, unless by my own faith I come to Him and meet Him, secretly and really as did the penitent apostle, whom the message that proclaimed the love of His Lord, emboldened to meet the Lord who loved, and by His own lips to be assured of forgiveness and friendship. It is possible to stumble at noontide as in the dark. A man may starve outside of barns filled with plenty, and his lips may be parched with

thirst though he is within sight of a broad river flowing in the sunshine. So a soul may stiffen into the death of self and sin, even though the voice that wakes the dead to a life of love be calling to it. Christ and His grace are yours if you will, but the invitations and beseechings of His mercy, the constant drawings of His love, the all-embracing offers of His forgiveness, may be all in vain if you do not grasp them, and hold them fast by the hand of faith. A. M.

Too late I loved thee, O thou beauty of ancient days, yet ever new; too late I loved thee. For thou wert within and I abroad; there I searched for thee, I in my deformity plunging among the fair forms which thou hast made. Thou wert with me, but I was not with thee. Things held me far from thee, which unless they were in thee were not at all. Thou didst call and shout, and didst burst through my deafness. Thou didst flash and shine and scatter my blindness. Thou didst breathe forth odors, and with every breath I draw I pant for thee. I tasted, and I hunger and thirst. Thou didst touch me, and I yearn for thy peace. Where hast thou not walked with me, O Truth, teaching me what to beware and what to desire, when I referred to thee whatever I could discover in this earthly state? Nor in all these things can I find a safe place for my soul but only in thyself; there may my scattered members be gathered, so that nothing of me shall be separated from thee. And sometimes thou admittest me to an unusual affection, felt in my inmost soul, and rising to a strange sweetness, which if it were perfected in me, I know not what in it would not belong to the life to come.

O Truth who art Eternity, and Love who art Truth, and Eternity who art Love, Thou art my God; to Thee do I cry night and day! *Augustine.*

7. We cannot fail to notice how much this verse and indeed the greater part of this chapter is in the glowing, joyous strain of Isaiah. The blessedness and glory of Zion's latter days thrill the prophet's heart, and he cannot do less than call for peans of praise to God, and implore men to publish these glad tidings among the great nations of the earth, and stir up the people of every land to prayer and to praise.

8, 9. To speak of “bringing them from the north country” links the glorious future to the sad and suffering past, showing that the Church of God is one in every age, and that from the remnant of these exiles God proposes to evolve

a more glorious Church that shall embosom the mightiest nations of the earth. When He so wills it and lends His hand to do it, it will be easy to bring the captives home; the blind and the lame, the enfeebled and those of most delicate situation—all alike are borne along with ease as if on the strong arms of God's ministering angels. What are human weaknesses, and what is a dreary and vast wilderness to Him or to His people when He stands for their help! He can make their way straight and smooth, and can pour rivers of water alongside their wilderness paths; so be it their hearts are broken and humbled before Him. It is beautiful and very significant to see the returning exiles weeping and praying as they set forth and press onward in their long desert journey; but God turns their mourning to joy; makes their desert pathway a blooming paradise; and gives as His reason that great truth—good for all His people in every age: "For I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born." Does not the great God love His people? When their hearts are humble and tender before Him, is anything too much for Him to do for their prosperity and joy? H. C.

The most solemn spiritual relations, and the most comforting promises, are presented in the Old Testament in figurative language derived from the family relationship. Jehovah is both husband and father; the Jewish Church His bride, Israel His children. The paternal training, watchfulness, goodness and mercy; the maternal tenderness; and the filial reverence, love and obedience which His children owe Him, are among the most familiar imagery employed by the prophets in their message. Thoughts like these must, surely, have shed heaven's light and sanctity around the life of the family. And so, when they speak to us of the merely earthly character of the Old Testament institutions and promises, we answer, that there are two modes of viewing the spiritual: that in which the earthly is lifted into the heavenly, which is that of the New Testament, and that in which the heavenly is brought down into the earthly, which is characteristic of the Old Testament, as preparatory to and preceding the New. A. E.

10-14. It adds to the interest of this magnificent strain of promise that God would have it proclaimed among all the Gentile nations and published in the distant islands—*i.e.*, in all the countries lying beyond the great sea. Let them all behold and see what God will do for His people. H. C.

The redemption of Israel is to be proclaimed

as of universal import and consequence. The scattering of Israel may be alluded to in speaking of "the nations" and "the isles," or these may be addressed simply as onlookers of the mighty drama. What happens to God's people must concern the whole world.

It betokened the restoration of God's favor (verse 10). The term of punishment was to draw to a close, and the era of reconciliation to commence. Just as He had "scattered" the Israelites, now He was about to recall them to Canaan. In the one act, as in the other, the Divine intervention and its moral significance would be made manifest. The greatest judgments of God on earth have their limits. "He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever." How carefully should the times of Divine discipline and reconciliation be observed by those who are concerned in them! *The power of God would be displayed in it* (verses 10, 11; cf. verse 8). As Sovereign. The words used, "He that scattered Israel will gather him," would seem to mean—He that scattered Israel would alone know where to discover them again. The figure of a shepherd and his flock is also suggestive of skill and authority. As the restored unity and national life of Israel were to be a marvellous phenomenon, much more would the spiritual unity of God's people throughout the world, of which the former was but the prototype. "The Lord knoweth them that are His." Another proof of the Divine power was afforded in the fact that Israel was to be delivered from one "that was stronger than he." The power of Nebuchadnezzar was to be broken. So the world-power which prevents the true freedom and unity of the Church from being realized will be destroyed. Indeed, already Christ has declared Himself as "Him that overcometh the world;" and in view of this the "little flock" are not to be dismayed. The day is coming when all enemies will be put under the feet of Christ, the Lord of the Church.

It was not only to be a restoration of the people to their own land (verses 12-14). God does nothing by halves. The industry, social and national development, and the spiritual life of Israel would be abundantly blessed. *The well-being of God's people is viewed as connected*—the spiritual with the material, and the material with the spiritual. There is no austerity in the religion of the restored, and yet their life is full of the spirit and practice of religion. The blessing of God upon the fruits of the earth is gratefully recognized, and as with a common thankfulness the people "flow together" to the

great festivals of the Temple. It is only as men exhibit this spirit—the spirit of righteousness and thankfulness—that the earth will yield the fulness of her increase. Other things being equal, the good man will succeed better than the wicked, even in secular pursuits. “Godliness is profitable unto all things,” etc. (1 Tim. 4:8). *It is to be complete and glorious.* How spontaneous the piety of the redeemed! In the picture here sketched we seem to catch a glimpse of the fulness of the millennial joy. It is a state of overflowing, ecstatic blessedness. The religious and the secular pursuits of men are to be harmonized. Age is to forget its weakness, and the bereaved their grief. The Church is to share in the general prosperity, and, as a consequence of the efficiency and fervor of its ministrations, the people are to be “satisfied with My goodness.” When shall this vision of human life in its wholeness and its glory be realized? Our own times exhibit few signs of such a golden age. Yet the Word of the Lord has spoken it, and we should with patience both labor and look for its fulfillment. M.

12-14. The deepest meaning of this prophecy is that spiritual men only can really praise God, because they are praising Him out of hearts that are being sustained by the richness of spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The satisfied heart must praise, else there is a proof that the heart is not really satisfied. Satisfaction can no more be concealed than dissatisfaction. When in the writings of the apostles we come across outbursts of doxology, it is just what we might expect as being in harmony with the greatness of the blessings received. And this is just what often makes the praise part of worship eminently unsatisfactory, that men are thanking God for what they have not received. All compositions having praise and thanksgiving for their elements, and being successful compositions, must, by the very nature of the case, owe their origin to some actual experience of God’s goodness. Hence it is important in this passage to notice how three things are bound together in the one prediction. 1. There is the gift of God. 2. The consequent satisfaction. 3. The irrepressible joy. And what greater gift can we have from God than a heart filled with pure, abiding joy, free from reproach, free from apprehension? Y.

14. Shall be satisfied. There is a satisfaction which suffices. That *of trust*, which prevents all murmuring at the dispensations of God, and which says, “I will trust, and not be

afraid.” That of *meekness*, which says, “It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth good in His sight.” That of *experience*—the consciousness that God is carrying on His work within us, deepening the hold of that which is good, loosening more and more the power of that which is evil. Consciousness of growth in grace. C.

15-17. Ramah, the home of the prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 7:17), was very near the sepulchre of Rachel, as may be seen in 1 Sam. 10:2. Samuel said to Saul, “When thou art departed from me this day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel’s sepulchre in the border of Benjamin.” On the poetic conception in this passage, J. D. Michaelis makes this comment: “An exquisite figure. Rachel, during all her life ardently desirous of children, dying in childbirth and buried on the border of Benjamin, lifts her maternal head from her tomb, looks around on the wide waste of ruin, and sees not one of her children in all the land! She pours out her heart in most bitter tears; then God appears for her consolation.” It was indeed exceedingly natural for the prophet to think of Rachel who so loved her children as being inconsolable when she saw them all gone from their native land. Her sorrow doubtless represented the sorrow of many Hebrew mothers, then bewailing their dead and mourning the desolation of their long-loved country. To hearts so borne down with grief, the words of Divine consolation come as cold water to a thirsty soul. “Thy works shall be rewarded,” seems to mean: All thou hast borne of pain and grief, and all thou hast done with toil in thy love for Zion, shall find its due reward. Thy children shall return again; thine end is full of hope; a glorious future awaits thy sons and daughters. So timely and so precious are the words of God’s consolations. H. C.

15. A voice was heard in Ramah. Ramah was a city of Benjamin, near which Rachel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, was buried; who is here, in a beautiful figure of poetry, represented as come forth out of her grave, and lamenting bitterly for the loss of her children, none of whom presented themselves to her view, being all either slain or gone into exile. The evangelist applies these words to Herod’s massacre of the infants at Bethlehem, and in its environs (Matt. 2:17, 18). *Blayney.*

This figurative representation was, in a great measure, literally true, when Herod slew the infants at Bethlehem, not far from Ramah, and therefore Matthew tells us that this prophecy was fulfilled in that event; several other in-

stances may be alleged where the sense of the prophecies which relates to the times of the Gospel is the interpretation that most exactly answers the natural and genuine import of the words. *Louth.*

It was the sad death of Rachel's which made her the typical mother in Israel. It was not an unclouded, merely prosperous life which could fitly have foreshadowed the lives of those by whom the promised seed was to come; and least of all of the virgin to whom it was said, "A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also." It was the wail of Rachel that poetical minds among the Jews heard from time to time mourning their national disasters—"Rachel weeping" for her children, when by captivity they were separated from their mother country, or when, by the sword of Herod, the mothers of Bethlehem were bereaved of their babes. But it was also observed that that which brought this anguish on the mothers of Bethlehem was the birth there of the last son of Israel, the blossom of this long-growing plant, suddenly born after a long and barren period, the son of Israel's right hand. *Dods.*

18. Having promised the return of the people from their exile, the prophet here speaks of the manner and spirit of this return. The essential point in it is, that *the heart is touched*. It begins with serious thought upon God's chastising hand under a conviction of personal stubbornness and guilt, and with some deep moving of heart toward return to God. With exquisite beauty and force the Lord here represents Himself as hearing the plaintive, solitary moans of Ephraim as he begins to think upon his ways and sets his face toward his long-forsaken God: "*I have surely heard.*" Then let no sinner imagine that God cares not for his soul, and never takes note of his penitential tears. If only those tears betoken humiliation, confession, sorrow and shame for sin, then surely the eye and the heart of God are upon them, and those bemoanings of sin and folly will come up into his ear. An untamed and unbroken bullock fitly represents the stubborn, refractory spirit of the unhumiliated sinner. He rebels against the judgments of the Lord, and thus compels the Lord to yet sterner blows. But sober thought comes at last, and with it an entire change in his views of himself and of his God. Is not his soul overwhelmed now with shame and grief? Oh, might he only turn to God thoroughly and acceptably! Nothing can more befit his case than this uplifting of his heart in prayer: "Turn Thou me; for Thou art the Lord my God." H. C.

Ephraim says, "Thou didst correct me, and I received correction." Herein is one of the chief ends of suffering; even when deserved for sin it is not to give penal deserts and only satisfy justice, but rather to urge the wrongdoer to see his fault and repent. Chastisement leads to reflection, humbles, makes us feel our need and helplessness, shows the want of God and His consolations, and so inclines us to return to Him. To profit us, however, it must be rightly endured. We must *receive* correction, not harden our hearts against it.

The Divine life in man begins with the turning round of the soul toward God. This "conversion" is the first step. It may not be suddenly discernible. It may not be indicated by any one epoch in our history. But it must take place. We have been wandering further and further from God. The most momentous step is the first step back to Him. We have to learn the necessity of this; to understand that while we remain in the old way, however pleasant it may be, it is leading us away from God, our mission, and our home; to see the importance of a change, a revolution, a regeneration, a new creation. Religion cannot begin with a sinful man in a mere improvement, much less in a natural development. He must turn round.

God only can turn His children back to Himself. Ephraim prays, "Turn Thou me, and I will return." We lack the desire to return until He "from whom all good desires proceed" implants the earnest wish in our hearts. We have not the strength to return. Old habits of sin are fetters that bind us down to the old life. The will is corrupt, and therefore we cannot will aright. But God does move us to return and give us power to return. The Gospel is not only an invitation; it is the power of God. By His Spirit God gives us new birth and the free life of His children. Yet for this grace we must seek in faith and penitence. Ephraim prays that God will turn him. We cannot turn ourselves. God will not turn us against our will. If we seek His grace, He will turn us to Himself. *Adeney.*

19. Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto life, not to be repented of. It is not itself repentance, because this is a practical change; but it is a grand means of producing this change, and it arises from the view of sin in its true light, as contrariety to God, neglect of the highest good, ingratitude to the best Friend, rebellion against our Maker—the view of sin as sin, independent of its effects. This sorrow produces an abhorrence of sin; he who feels it will have no idea of retaining a single sin in

his heart. The elements of repentance are found in the mourner's mind ; he turns to the Lord in earnest, yields himself up to be guided by the Lord, and utters the language of Ephraim : " Surely after I was turned, I repented, I was ashamed, yea, confounded." *R. Hall.*

20. *Is Ephraim my dear son?* Rather the sense is, " Is not Ephraim My dear son? Is he not a pleasant child?" That is, Is he not one that I have set my affections upon, as a parent does upon a child in whom he delights? God proceeds to say, Ever since I have so severely reprov'd and chastised him, I have still retained for him a fatherly kindness ; I am moved with compassion toward him, and will in due time pardon and receive him into favor. *W.*

Loroth.—In all exigencies of His children He is overcome with their complaints, and cannot hold out against their moanings ; He may, as Joseph, seem strange for a while, but cannot act that strangeness long ; His heart moves and sounds to theirs, gives the echo to their griefs and groans. *Is Ephraim a dear son?* Oh, the unspeakable privilege to have Him for our Father, who is the Father of mercies and compassions, and those not barren, fruitless pityings, for He is withal the God of all consolations. Do not think that He can shut out a bleeding soul that comes to Him, and refuse to take, and to bind up, and heal, a broken heart that offers itself to Him, puts itself into His hand, and entreats His help. Doth He require pity of us, and doth He give it to us, and is it not infinitely more in Himself? *Leighton.*

This inimitably precious passage closes fitly with the promise, " I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." Nothing can be more sure than God's mercy to the really humbled penitent. His infinite love forbids that mercy should fail to reach such a sinner. The showing of such mercy to such souls is the chief delight He finds in this revolted world. Oh, would sinners only believe this, then would they not turn from all sinning and press to His open arms to pour out their warm tears of sorrow for sin and of gratitude for such free and abundant pardon ! *H. C.*

22. *How long wilt thou go about?* According to the first evangelical promise concerning " the seed of the woman," followed this prediction of the prophet, " The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man." That new creation of a man is therefore " new," and therefore " a creation," because wrought in a woman only, without a man, compassing a man. This interpretation is ancient, literal and clear. The words import

a miraculous conception ; and the ancient Jews acknowledged this sense, and applied it determinately to the Messiah. This prophecy is illustrated by that of Isaiah, chap. 7 : 14. *Bp. Pearson.*

23. The cities shall be habitations of justice ; the mountain of Israel (so the whole land is called—Ps. 78 : 54), and especially Mount Zion, shall be a mountain of holiness. Justice toward men and holiness toward God must go together. Godliness and honesty are what God has joined, and let no man think to put them asunder, or to make one to atone for the want of the other. It is well with a people when they come out of trouble thus refined, and it is a sure presage of further happiness.

25. This is applicable to the spiritual blessings God has in store for all true penitents, for all that are just and holy ; they shall be abundantly satisfied with Divine graces and comforts. In the love and favor of God the weary soul shall find rest, and the sorrowful soul joy. *H.*

26. If we look attentively at the contents of chaps. 30 and 31, we find very sufficient causes for the sweetness of the prophet's sleep. Jehovah makes one long announcement of favor, restoration and comfort. Hitherto when the prophet has had to listen to Jehovah, if there have been consolatory utterances, they have been mingled with denunciation and words of the most melancholy import. But now there is one unbroken stream of good tidings, and the effect is shown even in sleep. And if in sleep, how much more in waking hours ! The whole round of the day becomes different when God looks favorably on the life. Sweetness of sleeping hours must come from all being right in waking hours. Now, with Jeremiah, as to his own personal life, all was right in waking hours, but with his nation all was wrong ; and so through the day he went about seeing sin and foreseeing suffering, and at night his vivid imagination must often have kept him awake or peopled what broken sleep he got with the most terrible dreams. Bad men may sleep better than good ones, so long as there is nothing to awaken their selfish fears, and good men spend restless nights over the troubles of those in whom they are interested. Yet the restlessness must come from the failing to see the abiding goodness of God. Here, for a little, God drove every cloud from the sky of His servant, and showed him how heavenly brightness was a thing entirely above earthly confusions ; and then His servant could get sweet sleep. And God will give to all that wait upon Him that

quiet calm of the heart which is to our higher life what sweet sleep is to the body. It is God's will that our present life, with all its varied needs, should have all the refreshment He can give. Y.

29, 30. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." There would have been truth in this saying had it been used only in reference to the mere natural consequences of their fathers' sins. In this sense their teeth were set on edge by the sour grapes their fathers had eaten. But the prophets pointed out the falsehood involved in the proverb as it was understood by the people. They showed that it was utterly false when applied to the spiritual relation in which each person stands in the judgment of Him who is no respecter of persons (Ezek. 18:2-4 sqq.). *Clark.*

30. "Every one shall die for his own iniquity." "Circumstances," "bodily organization," "temperament," "the maxims of society," "the conventionalities of the time"—all these things have something to do with shaping our single deeds and with influencing our character; but after we have made all allowances for these influences which affect *me*, let us ask the philosophers who bring them forward as diminishing or perhaps annihilating responsibility, "And what about that *me* which these things influence?" After all, let me remember that the deed is *mine*, and that every one of us shall, as Paul puts it, give account of *himself* before God. A. M.

31. The *Old Testament itself*, while it regards the decree of salvation revealed in it, and the kingdom of God founded thereupon, as eternal, as extending to all times and to all races of men, acknowledges that the manifestation of God's kingdom at that time was imperfect and temporary; for it points forward to a new revelation, in which that which is *demanded* by the letter of the law and *signified* by its ordinances shall become a *reality* through Divine communication of life; indeed, at the very time in which the old form of the theocracy was overthrown, it predicts the new eternal covenant which God would make with His people. O.

31-34. The remaining verses of this chapter have but one theme—the richer spiritual blessings of the Gospel age, surpassing those of the age before Christ came. They are presented under the phrase, "a new covenant." In the first covenant the Lord *proposed* to Israel to enter into relations of special alliance, service and trust with Himself, and prescribed minutely the terms and conditions of this relationship.

He delivered them from their bondage in Egypt, and on the basis of this deliverance exhorted them to become His people, and promised on His part to become their God. They assented, and then He gave them His moral law of Ten Commandments, and next His ceremonial and civil institutes which were designed as means of religious culture and of protection specially against idolatry and generally against sin. As is indicated in our passage, those agencies were mainly external; the law itself was written on tables of stone. But the "new covenant" in its agencies for begetting and maintaining the religious life was to be inward and spiritual. The Lord would write it, not on stone tables, but on living hearts. There can be no doubt that this refers to the great, the special and distinguishing feature of the Gospel age—the *gift of the Spirit*. By this Divine agency the law of God is written on the very hearts of men: "They are all taught of God" (Isa. 54:13). They are taught the spiritual nature and bearings of the Divine law as never otherwise, and what is yet more, they not only understand it, but they *love* it, and joyfully obey it. They respond to its perceived claims with joyful promptness, and find their supreme delight in learning and doing the will of God. As here so tersely and beautifully expressed, the result of this new covenant and of this writing of God's law upon their heart is that the Lord becomes their God and they His people. God is theirs and they are His. All that God is, all that He can do for His creatures, He becomes to them and does for them. All that is involved in being His own—controlled and used by Him they become toward their God. These relations are exceedingly broad and intensely rich and blessed. God gives them His love and protection; and they give Him their heart's best love and the whole service of their life. As appears more fully in verse 34, this new covenant makes special account of the forgiveness of sin: "For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more." This forgiveness implies the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and shows that this sacrifice also was embraced in the new covenant. So that under this phrase must be included the great essential blessings of the Gospel dispensation—the gift of God's Son as teacher and sacrifice for sin; and the gift of God's Spirit as also a spiritual teacher and an agent of spiritual power on human hearts unto holiness. The scope of this passage puts this new covenant somewhat in contrast with the old. The new is not like the old. Its prominent features are different; its

main agencies are new and peculiar. This must not be pressed too far, for it cannot imply that there was no forgiveness of sin under the old economy, or that there was no Holy Spirit there. But it does imply that the prominent religious agencies in that were external; were in the letter; made up largely of ritual forms; the law itself being written on stone; while under the new covenant the great religious agencies are the mission and death of Christ and the permanent work of the Divine Spirit on human hearts. H. C.

The first covenant had been repeatedly and flagrantly broken. As a system of morals, it was perfect and without flaw; but human nature, being corrupt, was unable to keep its conditions (Rom. 7: 12). Universal corruption witnessed to the hopelessness of salvation by such a method. And yet the transgressions of men were not thereby excused. The essential depravity of man was revealed in a stronger and more definite character; but it already existed, and was an occasion of the Divine anger. As the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews phrases it, God, "finding fault with them" (Heb. 8: 8), reminds Judah and Israel of His delivering mercy ("I took them by the hand," etc.), and declares His constancy and uninterrupted tenderness ("I was an *husband*," etc.). In strict justice the transgressors of the law had no claim to any consideration. They had incurred the righteous displeasure of God. But His merciful purpose was not laid aside. Another opportunity of salvation was afforded, and when the first covenant failed, a second covenant was designed of grander conception and more universal adaptation. The love of God affronted does not withdraw itself, but busies itself with new schemes to supplement human frailty and diminish the occasions and possibilities of failure. M.

The old covenant starts with law; the new one springs out of life. Verse 33 gives one of the Old Testament ways of expressing the doctrine of regeneration. God writes the laws of spiritual life on the heart, just as He writes the laws of natural life on every natural germ; and then all the rest is a matter of unfolding, of growth, of encouragement, of culture. The old covenant was one long, exhaustive, thorough experiment by which the fact became clear that in the *natural man* there was nothing to unfold. The new covenant established within a very brief period that, given a new life-principle working within him, man is indeed a being of glorious capabilities. Y.

The new covenant is a promise, is the assur-

ance indeed, that God has taken the matter of our salvation into His own hands. It is all of grace; He gives everything; nothing is left to our own solitary effort. If we read over the words of the covenant as they are given here from first to last, there is not a single word about anything to be done by us. The whole covenant is not so much between man and His Maker as between Jehovah and man's Representative, the Lord Jesus Christ. The human side of the covenant has been already fulfilled by Jesus, and there remains nothing now but the covenant of giving, not the covenant of requirements. The whole covenant with regard to us, the people of God, now stands thus: "I will give this; I will bestow that; I will fulfil this promise; I will grant that favor." The old covenant said, "Do this, and thou shalt live." The new says, "I will do all." C.

This covenant is a revelation of positive and uplifting truth in a time of negations and false refuges. It is as evangelical as any disclosure of Isaiah; it is indeed a foretelling of the regenerative outpouring of Pentecost, the New Testament set in the heart of and contrasted with the Old (Heb. 8). The new covenant is spiritual. It begins in the heart, and works from within outward. The law of life and of influence is as atomic as heaven and as voluntary as the choices of man. If any man will do the Divine will, he shall know it. Whosoever will may take the water of life freely. The terms of the new covenant are universal in their sweep. No welcoming soul is excluded from them or by them. They are so easy to understand that any child may apprehend them. Their criterion is not intellectual culture, but a willing heart enlightened by the Spirit of God. Forgiveness is perfectly free under these conditions; it has only to be sincerely accepted; and forgiveness is the first of these terms to be received. We are saved by faith, and faith is God's gift to us. The new covenant is sure, surer than the ordinances of earth or sky, as sure as the character of the unchangeable God. It is final and eternal, for the Lord of hosts has witnessed it. McPherson.

The prophet was not commissioned to give them any new commandment, still less to admonish to strict observance of the old, but to bring the promise, which characteristically was to this effect, that God would give them a new heart to know Him that He was Jehovah. And that it was not in any wise connected with ignorance of the law, nor, on the other hand, expected in conjunction with a return to its merely outward ordinances, appears from this,

that the great promise of "the latter days"—of the Messianic time of completion—was that Jehovah would then make a new covenant with Israel, not according to that when He brought them out of Egypt, but one in which He would put His law in their inward parts, and write it on their hearts. And most important as adding yet another element: then would one man no longer teach his neighbor, but all be taught directly of God. This indicates the existence of the old elements, while at the same time it points to an entire change in the future. Then would not only the old covenant and the old law, but even prophetism be superseded, or rather fulfilled. All this in the "latter days," or Messianic time, when, as Zechariah predicts, all ritual ordinances would merge in that universal consecration to God, in which "Holiness unto Jehovah," the inscription on the high priest's mitre, would, so to speak, be that on all vessels in common use in Jerusalem (14 : 20). But what does all this mean, when translated into the prose language of history, but the fulfilment of the law in its spiritual aspect, such as we find it described in the Epistles of Paul and, indeed, throughout the whole New Testament? But even this is not all. Jeremiah connects with the prediction of the new law, which was to be written on the heart when man's teaching would give place to universal knowledge of God, this promise deeply significant, even if in its then form it applied to Israel: "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (verse 34). Similarly Ezekiel, the priest-prophet, speaks of the time when God would sprinkle clean water upon them, and cleanse them from their filthiness, give them a new heart, put His Spirit within them, take away their stony heart, and make them to walk in His statutes (36 : 25-27). And that these promises would find their fulfilment in the time of the Messiah, the Son of David, is thus expressly stated by the same prophet in the following chapter of His predictions: "And David My servant shall be king over them, and they all shall have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments, and observe My statutes, and do them." And this is what Ezekiel emphatically designates as the covenant of peace, the everlasting covenant which God would make (37 : 24-26). Lastly, with this also agrees both the saying of Zechariah (13 : 1): "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness," and this of Micah (7 : 19, 20), that God would cast all their sins into the

depths of the sea, and thus "perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham" which He had "sworn unto our fathers from the days of old." A. E.

To what time or person the promises made here by Jeremiah and by Ezekiel (chaps. 34 : 23, 26 ; 36 : 26) related might be uncertain before Malachi prophesied; though they have internal marks which point to the Messiah. But Malachi, by his prophecy concerning "the Messenger of the covenant" (chap. 3 : 1), put it out of all doubt. This was to say, in other words, that Messiah should be the declarer, the publisher, the mediator of that better covenant, as Moses was of the old covenant; and that a law should be given by Him. *Bp. Chandler.*

33. Says Jeremiah, speaking of the "new covenant," or gracious relation between God and His people, and uttering the very words of God, "I will put *My law* in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." This relation between God and His people is identical with His *dwelling in them*, as the gift of His Spirit, and He produces this relation by putting *His law* in their inward parts, and by writing it in their hearts. The *law* here evidently means a *knowledge* of God and His will. The writing it *in their hearts* is the work of the *Spirit*, giving inward effect to the truth; and the resulting relation between God and His people is all they need or can have of Him, save the sacred peace, the holy delight, the Divine communings which follow on that relation. *J. S. Stone.*

In their heart will I write it. It lies in the nature of the case that the law at the time in which it was given did not present itself as a law to be abrogated, for thereby the law would have weakened itself. Certainly the Mosaic regulations are given very positively, as everlasting regulations, from which Israel was not to deviate; but that the *position of the people toward the law* shall in the future be different from what it is in the present time, is stated in the Pentateuch very distinctly—viz., De. 30 : 6, where it is declared, that in the last times God will circumcise the *heart* of the people, and so will not meet them merely in the way of command, but will awaken in them a susceptibility for the fulfilment of the law. Thus the germ of the prophecy of a new covenant of an essentially different character, as it was uttered by Jeremiah in those very days when the battlements of the old city of David sank in the dust, lies already in the Pentateuch, O.

The law shall be written in their hearts by the finger of the Spirit, as formerly it was written in the tables of stone. God writes His law in the hearts of all believers, makes it ready and familiar to them, at hand when they have occasion to use it as that which is written in the heart (Prov. 3 : 3). He makes them in care to observe it, for that which we are solicitous about is said to lie near our hearts. He works in them a disposition to obedience, a conformity of thought and affection to the rules of the Divine law as that of the copy to the original. This is here promised, and ought to be prayed for that our duty may be done conscientiously and with delight. H.

Furthermore, there is wrought in the heart by God a love to the law as well as a consent to it, such a love that the man thanks God that He has given him such a fair and lovely representation of what perfect holiness would be ; that He has given such measuring lines, by which he knows how a house is to be builded in which God can dwell. The law is fully written on the heart when a man takes pleasure in holiness, and feels a deep pain whenever sin approaches him. It is not so much what you do as what you delight to do, which becomes the clearest test of your character. The main point of the whole is this, that whereas our nature was once contrary to the law of God, so that whatever God forbade we at once desired, and whatever God commanded we therefore began to dislike, the Holy Spirit comes and changes our nature, and makes it congruous to the law, so that now whatsoever God commands our will commands. How much better to have the law written upon the heart than upon tablets of stone ! *Anon.*

"The word" must not only be heard and received, but "engrafted" in us. It is God's gracious promise, "I will put My laws in their hearts, and write them in their inward parts"—that is, He will enlighten our minds to the understanding of His will, and frame our hearts and affections to the obedience of it. This is the true engrafting of the word. Then "the root of the matter is within us." If it be engrafted by the Master's hand, you will know it by *this* token, *it will be fruitful*, it will spring up and be visible in your life, conduct, and conversation. The graft draws all the sap of the stock to itself ; your affections, your purposes, your cares, your thoughts, will serve the word. *T. Manton.*

Afflictions of the flesh, such as watchings and fastings and subjecting of the body, have no tendency in themselves to make men better ;

they often have made them worse. They are no test of holiness and true faith, taken by themselves. A man may be most austere in his life, and by that very austerity learn to be cruel to others, not tender. It should ever be borne in mind that the severest and most mortified life is as little a passport to heaven or criterion of saintliness as benevolence is, or usefulness, or amiableness. Self-discipline is a condition, but not a sign of holiness. It may leave a man worldly or make him a tyrant. It only ministers to God's purposes when God uses it. It is only when grace is in the heart, when power from above dwells in a man, that anything outward or inward turns to his salvation.

Newman.

I will be their God, and they shall be My people. "*I will*—I will be to them a God ;" so, also, He says of them, "*They shall*—they shall be to Me a people." It is a provision of this perfect covenant, wherein all spiritual blessings are made over, no less *surely*, than freely, to the heirs of promise, that God's power, wisdom and goodness shall effectually work together to overcome all difficulties and opposition in the way—first, of establishing, and then of maintaining to the end, this blessed relationship between Himself and them. Whether these difficulties arise from the power and subtlety of spiritual enemies from without or from the strength of natural depravity in the hearts of His children—let what will stand in the way to prevent, God declares, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

His people owning God as theirs. "They shall be My people"—that is, they shall so demean themselves ; their spirit and deportment among men shall witness for them that they stand to Me in this relation. We may specify four unquestionable marks by which the people of God evidence this relation to Him ; and whereby they that are such may assure themselves, again, of His eternal foreknowledge and choice of them so to be, "holy, and without blame before Him, in love." They yield themselves to His authority. They separate themselves from an evil world. They devote themselves to His service. They live on Him for protection and happiness. Unalterable is that relation into which they are brought who have come to God for mercy to their unrighteousness, through Christ. He puts them among His children ; He contends with their remaining corruptions by the power and grace of His spirit ; He disciplines them by afflictions ; He warns them, and inspires them with godly fear,

by the admonitions of His word and Spirit ; He departs from them, in sensible comforts, for a season, that they may not depart from Him, nor He from them, forever. By these, as well as by direct allurements of His love, He keeps them in obedience ; weans them from the world ; wins their affections ; and having caused them to be a people to Him on earth, He ministers to them "an abundant entrance" into His everlasting kingdom and glory. There that word has its complete accomplishment, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people." *Goode.*

34. Is it not remarkable that almost at the very point when it attained its full development the seeds of dissolution in the old economy begin to show themselves ? The prophet gives the promise of another covenant ; thereby the first one is declared now to be growing old, and soon about to disappear. "I will forgive their iniquities, and remember their sins no more"—so runs the promise in the covenant—"for they shall all know Me, from the least to the greatest." Thou morning of a brighter day, how long thou dost delay beneath the rim of earth ! Lo, heaven opens for the sweet angelic song, "Good-will to men !" Another revelation is beginning now. But there is being instituted, too, a new kind of communion between heaven and earth ; and while Moses dedicated the old covenant by blood of bulls and goats, Christ dedicates the new one in His own, and by His offering fills up the chasm that separates a holy God from an unholy world. Yea, the propitiation which could but be dimly shadowed forth by Moses in those sacrificial rites—prophetic, though mysterious—that grand atoning work, Christ shows in its reality. *Van O.*

No one will contend that until the Gospel is known universally, it will ever cease to be the duty of Christians to say to all around them, "Know the Lord ;" or that we have any reason to expect that the Bible will ever be superseded by a miraculous dispensation which shall flash Divine illumination on the mind, and thus raise mankind above the use of means. The import of the prediction appears to be simply this, that when the reproach of indolence shall have been wiped away from the Church, and every man shall have said to his neighbor, "Know the Lord" (verse 34), the reproach of ignorance shall be wiped away from the world ; for the Spirit of God will so graciously and universally bless the means employed as to render *their continuance comparatively unnecessary.* This amnesty from heaven having been universally preached and received, the earth shall

be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea. *J. Harvis.*

35-37. After promises so rich, it is a merciful condescension to the weakness of human faith that God should append such sublime assurances and asseverations. These are made doubly strong by the choice of their terms and figures. We are reminded that the God who gave these glorious promises is He who gave the sun for our light by day, and can not He make another sun arise on the darkness of our souls ? It is also the same who ordained the courses of the moon and of the stars for our light by night ; and cannot He break up the otherwise dense and hopeless darkness of the human soul by the rays of heavenly light ? Things impossible to be done are adduced to show that this casting off of Israel can never be. The things thus adduced certify to us the vastness of His power who has made these promises, and may be taken as His pledge that Omnipotence can surely accomplish what His love has devised and his veracity stands pledged to perform. The Lord touches the point of man's worst fear when He says, "I will not cast off Israel for all her great sins." When we think of Israel as representing the visible Church of God, and then look at her great corruptions and the infinite trial the Lord must have felt under her waywardness and backslidings, it is exceedingly comforting to read this promise and find in it the assurance that the Lord will never cease to have a people, but will purify and discipline, redeem and save, till they shall be a people to His praise, and be fitted to do His appointed work on earth.

38-40. In these verses Jerusalem, the ancient city of the Lord, represents His Church and kingdom in the latter days. It is here rebuilt, considerably enlarged, and what is much more significant, *so* enlarged as to include the unclean and loathsome localities outside but near its former walls. It now encloses all these, yet not *as* unclean and repulsive, but *as* now cleansed and made holy to the Lord. That is, the Church of God makes aggressions upon the kingdom of darkness. She goes down into the valley of Sodom, and having cleansed it out, converts it into a paradise. The figure corresponds to Ezekiel's river of waters from under the sanctuary (chap. 47) flowing down into the desert, bearing verdure, fertility and beauty on its bosom and pouring healing virtue into the Dead Sea. So this enlarged city becomes all "holy to the Lord," and enduring also, "for it shall not be plucked up nor thrown

down any more forever." To this the Lord God of Hosts pledges His omnipotence and signifies that when His Spirit shall have written His law on the very hearts of men, the thing *will be done!* It deserves special notice that these two prophecies illustrate each other. What is promised in the "new covenant" paves the way for what is done in the "new city" built to the Lord. The writing of God's law upon human hearts by His Spirit supplies the power that is to transform all that is vile and unclean in our world to moral beauty and holiness. The gospel goes down into the deep-

est sinks of human pollution to diffuse there the sweetness of love and the fragrance of piety—to redeem those wrecks of humanity from the loathsomeness and the curse of sin and restore them to the purity and bliss of paradise. And shall we not praise God for all this? Shall not the promise and prophecy of it be a joy and a strength to His people in their gospel mission, sustaining their hearts in the "work of faith and the labor of love and the patience of hope" until prophecy shall become history, and "not one good word shall fail of all that the Lord has spoken?" H. C.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTER XXXII., IN VOL. VII., PAGE 442.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTER XXXIII.

- 33:1** MOREOVER the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah the second time, while he
 2 was yet shut up in the court of the guard, saying, Thus saith the LORD that doeth it, the
 3 LORD that formeth it to establish it; the LORD is his name: Call unto me, and I will answer
 4 thee, and will shew thee great things, and difficult, which thou knowest not. For thus saith
 the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of
 the kings of Judah, which are broken down *to make a defence* against the mounts, and against
 5 the sword: They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but it is to fill them with the dead bodies
 of men, whom I have slain in mine anger and in my fury, and for all whose wickedness I have
 6 hid my face from this city. Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them;
 7 and I will reveal unto them abundance of peace and truth. And I will cause the captivity of
 8 Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first. And I will
 cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon
 all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned against me, and whereby they have trans-
 9 gressed against me. And *this city* shall be to me for a name of joy, for a praise and for a glory,
 before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them, and shall
 10 fear and tremble for all the good and for all the peace that I procure unto it. Thus saith the
 LORD: Yet again there shall be heard in this place, whereof ye say, It is waste, without man
 and without beast, even in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, that are desolate,
 11 without man and without inhabitant and without beast, the voice of joy and the voice of glad-
 ness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that say, Give
 thanks to the LORD of hosts, for the LORD is good, for his mercy *endureth* for ever: *and of them*
 that bring *sacrifices* of thanksgiving into the house of the LORD. For I will cause the captivity
 12 of the land to return as at the first, saith the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts: Yet again
 shall there be in this place, which is waste, without man and without beast, and in all the
 13 cities thereof, an habitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down. In the cities of
 the hill country, in the cities of the lowland, and in the cities of the South, and in the land of
 Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks again
 pass under the hands of him that telleth them, saith the LORD.
 14 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good word which I have

15 spoken concerning the house of Israel and concerning the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause a Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David ; and he shall
 16 execute judgement and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely : and this is *the name* whereby she shall be called, The LORD is
 17 our righteousness. For thus saith the LORD : David shall never want a man to sit upon the
 18 throne of the house of Israel ; neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to
 19 offer burnt offerings, and to burn oblations, and to do sacrifice continually. And the word
 20 of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD : If ye can break my covenant
 21 of the day, and my covenant of the night, so that there should not be day and night in
 22 their season ; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should
 23 not have a son to reign upon his throne ; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. As
 24 the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured ; so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me. And the word of
 25 the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD did choose, he hath cast them off ? thus do they de-
 26 spise my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. Thus saith the LORD : If my covenant of day and night *stand* not, if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven
 and earth ; then will I also cast away the seed of Jacob, and of David my servant, so that I will not take of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob : for I will cause their captivity to return, and will have mercy on them.

Chap. 33. God reveals His gracious purpose of healing the wounds of Jerusalem, restoring the captivity of Judah, forgiving their sins, and distinguishing them with such blessings as to strike the astonished nations with fear and trembling (verses 1-9). He foretells that the land, whose desolation they deplored, should again flourish with multitudes, both of men and cattle (verses 10-13). He confirms His former promise of establishing a kingdom of righteousness in a branch of the house of David, and rendering it perpetual, together with the priesthood of the sons of Levi (verses 14-18). He declares His covenant in this respect with David and the Levites, to be as sure as the covenant of day and night (verses 19-22). And, to remove the reproach of having cast off those families, whom He had once distinguished by His choice, He renews His protestations of infallibly restoring the seed of Jacob, and of appointing the seed of David to rule over them forever (verse 23), to the end. *Blayney.*

The city was at this time besieged, and tottering to its fall. This prospective ruin of the city and Temple chilled the hearts of those who would fain hold fast to the promises of the Lord, and hence became a sore temptation to despondency and even despair. To reassure their sinking faith, these reiterated promises are given here in the very jaws of national ruin. H. C.

Verses 1-13 may be characterized as *God's promise to Judah and Israel of ultimate return and restoration*. Uttered just before the final captivity, the words were designed for the

comfort of devout Jews. Through all the long dreary history there had always been true worshippers, for whose sake, in great part, God had forborne with His guilty people. The fervent intercession of these faithful ones, like that of Elijah, had always availed much, even in the darkest crises of Israel's guilt. And now to these devout and loyal souls, just about to be tried with the fire of utter destruction, God utters these words of hope by Jeremiah. To such as were to be taken captive to Babylon, and to their faithful successors who should arise in the generations of the captivity, He utters these cheering predictions. For the comfort, the faith, patience and hope of all the true-hearted and devout throughout the sad years of exile by the rivers of Babylon, when the throne of David was vacant ; when Judah as well as Israel was desolate of people ; when there was neither capital nor Temple nor priesthood ; when all evidences of their nationality should cease to exist, Jeremiah was here inspired, while announcing the great calamity, to promise a return from exile, and the rebuilding of the Jewish state. B.

1. Jeremiah had resolutely witnessed to the truth, and now he was confined in the king's prison in order to his being silenced. But so far from the Divine communications being less frequent, they were more so, and, if possible, more weighty and important. The word of the Lord came to him the *second* time, and a gracious revelation of God's power and willingness to bless. M.

2, 3. *The basis of prayer ; the clear invitation*

and explicit promise ; and the specific results here pledged. In the sublime self-assertion of His creative, formative and sustaining might, and in the simple utterance of His covenant name, God invites His troubled people to find evidence of His ability to answer to their utmost call. In this is found the single basis of all prayer ; His sovereign might and control in providence, and His covenant mercy toward men. In words of invitation so clear that they cannot be misapprehended, so personal and direct that their summoning force cannot be avoided, He challenges their faith to test His power and willingness, even in respect to issues vast as those involved in this calamity. And we are further to note, that His promise to give in response to their call is absolutely without qualification. Like every other Divine promise in the Old and New Testament, that of the answer to prayer is conditioned upon a right spirit and a trusting heart. The prayer of such a spirit God will assuredly answer ; either with that gift which is asked or with a better blessing. What were *the great and mighty things* promised as the specific result of their call, we learn in the verses following. In these words God discloses the grand results of future Jewish history, involving the coming of Messiah. This disclosure He makes to the praying, trusting and hoping Israelites, that in the days of darkness they might be encouraged to continue their trust and prayer and hope. And not less to faithful believers to-day is this God's assurance concerning themselves, their households and the Church of Christ. To every faithful, trusting soul to day, as in every day of all the past, God's invitation and promise, His declaration of ability and willingness to do great things in response to fervent supplication, still finds expression and fulfilment. B.

Asking, on the one side, and giving in answer to that asking, on the other, would seem to be nearly as unmistakable an account of a direct transaction as speech is capable of composing. Especially would it appear to stand clear of all possible ambiguity, when we remember that the whole Revelation, from end to end of its records, offers no hint of any different theory ; that it was precisely in this spirit, and with this understanding, that every biblical believer prayed, from Adam in Eden to John in Patmos—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, all patriarchs speaking to Jehovah, and answered by Him ; Moses, Samuel, Elijah and the whole line of valiant, praying prophets ; David, whose devotions have been the common language of worship through both dispensa-

tions, and bear to-day fresher marks of perceptuity than when his own tears fell upon the lines he wrote—whose petitions were accounted worthy to be taken upon the lips of the Redeemer Himself amid the tortures of the crucifixion ; the disciples, the mother, evangelists, apostles—all, with undivided agreement, asking the Father for what their soul craved, and receiving at God's invisible hand, immediately, blessings that, but for such asking, could not have been bestowed. The witnesses are explicit. There are placed before us two parties. One is just as literally and exactly a person as the other ; the Divine side of the mutual transaction involving precisely the same attributes of personality as the human—no hint to the contrary ; and—mark especially—the fact of conscious request and conscious compliance every way as distinct—the difference between faith and sense being of course granted—as if a hand were visibly stretched out on one side open, and were visibly filled from the other. F. D. H.

He is told to pray for great things. The great and mighty things which it pleased the Lord to bestow and Jeremiah to receive related to the deliverance of the people of God from their future captivity, and the restoration of God's goodness to them. You observe that God requires to be asked for the great and mighty things of His grace before He bestows them. *G. Bowen.*

To pray with the firm persuasion that God hears, and will, in His own time and way, answer, but to require no sensible impressions upon the mind at the time, in reply, is to ask in faith. But to make our comfort and the performance of our duty depend on the response which we may seem to receive is not the highest exercise of love to God or trust in Him. Communion with Christ does not require responsive influences upon our hearts in order to be real. *N. Adams.*—The answer may be delayed to test our faith, to sift our motives, to prepare us for the right reception of the answer ; but let us never doubt that whatsoever we ask in Christ's name will be granted unto us. And this faith, nothing wavering, is itself the test of the sincerity of our heart, and the Christ-conformed character of our petitions. *A. Saphir.*

Call unto Me and I will answer, saith the Lord. Find in this explicit Divine promise an inspired Old Testament commentary directly responsive to Paul's sublime ascription (Eph. 3 : 20), "to Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

4-9. *God's pledge of restoration and rebuilding after captivity.* Verses 4 and 5 vividly depict the ruin and desolation of city and nation. "Houses thrown down" and the *débris* "filled with the dead bodies of men," slain at the Chaldeans' hands, yet according to Jehovah's purpose, in punishment of Judah's wickedness—these broken homes and this decimation by the sword were to be followed by the long banishment into a strange land. This was the great calamity, then near at hand, which the prophet announced.

But over against this was he bidden to promise a return from exile and a restoration to their home-land. Under a figure of the healing of one long and sorely diseased, God declares that He will at length bring to the nation health and cure. Then without figure He explicitly affirms that He will bring back Judah and Israel from captivity and build them again. Then their iniquities shall be pardoned and they shall be cleansed. And their name shall be "a joy, a praise, and an honor before all the nations of the earth;" who shall thus be taught the wonderful loving-kindness of Jehovah to men. In verses 10-13 the same glorious and rich promises continue to find utterance—promises oft repeated by other prophets, with larger particulars. Verses 14-18 intimate that only a partial and inconsiderable fulfilment of these grand and far-reaching pledges was realized upon the return from the seventy years of captivity, and onward until the coming of Christ. Around Him all these Old Testament promises cluster; to His person and work they point; in the establishment of His kingdom they are centred and are completely fulfilled. B.

6. *The Divine treatment of sin.* "Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them." Here, as in so many other Scriptures, the moral, political, social, and spiritual recovery of Israel is spoken of under the image of bodily healing. For all healings of the body are types and pledges of the better healing. If God so cares for the body, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the tomb, shall He not care for the soul, which is eternal? This verse 6 is a promise that the Divine treatment of sin shall be effectual. The Lord is Jehovah-ropi. He heals them that have need of healing. C.

Sin is man's self-induced disease, unnatural, and self-incurable. Righteousness or rightness is wholeness, wholth, or health, which is the meaning of the Old Testament *peace*. This is wrought in the soul by God, and is the restoration of its nature as made originally in His image. This "health and cure" He is always

able, willing, and glad to impart to those humble, repentant souls that trust in and call upon Him. B.

10, 11. To the expressions common in this prophet to denote the peace and happiness of the people, are added here words of thanksgiving and praise to God. The people will not only be full of joy; they will also remember the great Giver of all their blessings with overflowing soul, adoring His goodness and mercy that endure forever. This indicates the richest spiritual blessings—the work of the Spirit of God upon their heart, and not merely the accumulation of worldly good. H. C.

11. The Lord is good, His mercy endureth forever. Goodness belongs to nature and to Providence. It presides over all the resources of creation—opens the mine, and covers the field, and adorns the garden—pours out daily the treasures of its full horn into the hands of men. What goodness giveth, they gather. But Mercy belongs especially to the gospel; she is seen walking along the paths of patriarchs, prophets, and priests—in the tabernacle and in the temple, in worship and in teaching—giving them hints about the seed of the woman, and the sceptre of Israel, and the star of Jacob, and the Man of Sorrows, and the Lamb slain, and the fountain opened; and then, after this typical and prophetic course, Mercy shows us, at Bethlehem, Christ's manger and cradle; and then, at Calvary, reveals the cross under which she stands. *Stoughton.*

Sacrifices of thanksgiving. Inter-mixed with searching and inspired doctrines and ordinances of religious sacrifice, we find in the Bible such expressions as the "sacrifices of thanksgiving," the "sacrifices of praise," and "sacrifices of joy." If there is any paradox, it clearly belongs to that grand paradox which runs all through the Gospel, and its transforming work; the "service that is perfect freedom;" "as poor yet making many rich;" "having nothing, yet possessing all things." That is, if the Church would fill out her rightful office, restore the waste places, and extend the kingdom of Christ in the world, she must restore first the Divine plan of faith working by love which God gave her; she must reaffirm the doctrine of stated, systematic and adequate sacrifices for that holy end; she must not cheat her children with any delusive dream of putting the cloak of Christ's righteousness on themselves or others so long as the thick undergarment of their own selfishness and avarice clings close to them and is not rent apart and torn off; she must teach and train

every child she baptizes to keep his eyes, his hands, his feet, and all his powers ever ready and intent to seek out and to occupy the occasions of self-denial for her honor and the glory of her crucified Head; and then it will come about, as the promises of God are true, under the wonder-working law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, that a love for this kind of service will grow up, and a sacred passion for the Church's honor will be kindled, such as will cast out the bondage of constraint, enthroning the gracious and royal law which is "ready to give and glad to distribute," making of each disciple the "cheerful giver" whom the Lord loves. F. D. H.

12, 13. In these verses, when the prophet would set forth the blessed life that the restored people should enjoy, he drew a picture, not of city, but of country life; not of hard, exacting toil, but of healthful, peaceful occupation—the pastoral life of a quiet, beautiful land. It is a symbol of all healthful employ, and such employ shall be a further feature in the blessedness that is to be. C.—As a quiet pastoral life filled their highest ideal of peace, repose, and abundance—a fact due somewhat to the examples of the patriarchs and of David—so here this state of spiritual enjoyment and peace is clothed in these images. The contrast is made strong; in this very place, doomed to be so desolate as to have in it neither man nor any of his domestic animals—here shall yet be the dwellings of shepherds, with their flocks reposing most quietly. The last clause of verse 13 refers to the usual mode of counting their flocks—viz., causing them to pass under the hand of one who should number them. H. C.

14. *I will perform that good thing which I have promised.* The coming of the Messiah was that good thing which God had promised, which is therefore called in a peculiar manner, "The promise made unto the fathers" (Acts 13:32), as being the greatest of all the promises, and that in which all the rest were comprehended. Bp. Beveridge.

15. *The righteous Scion of David.* Here is a great leading prediction, which enables us to interpret as to the time and mode in which the rest of the glorious predictions connected with it were to be fulfilled. We know full well who this righteous Scion was, and when we look at His work, we can translate all the figurative language into spiritual realities. We no longer go looking for Israel and Jerusalem in any mere local way, and the vineyards and cornlands and pastures of the restored people of God we understand to be only feeble indications

of the spiritual satisfactions coming through Christ. This righteous Scion springs from David. According to the flesh, He is connected with a name suggestive of past days of prosperity and glory. David himself is emphatically to be reckoned as a righteous stock. That he fell into grievous backslidings is not to be denied; but we know his aspirations, his sighings and strugglings after conformity with the law of God. Y.

15-18. The pith of the promise was that the Lord would bring forth that glorious Scion from the stock of David, His greater son, the Messiah, and make Him king forever on His throne over all the people of the Lord. But this promise affirms also the perpetual succession of the Levitical priesthood: "Neither shall the priests the Levites ever want a man before Me to offer burnt-offering," etc. Zechariah and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews are authorized expounders of this remarkable prophecy. Zechariah taught (chap. 3) that after the captivity the priesthood was to be restored in its purity and beauty, and that the high-priest and his associates were men of typical significance, foreshadowing God's "servant, the Branch," who will "take away the iniquity of that land in one day"—thus "by one offering perfecting forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). Zechariah also taught in chap. 4, that through the priesthood the Lord would pour the oil of His grace upon His people; and in chap. 6, that the Branch (Messiah) should "build the temple of the Lord" and "be a priest upon His throne"—i.e., be both king and priest, thus uniting in Himself the functions of David and of Aaron. The Epistle to the Hebrews elaborates the great idea that Jesus Christ, after He had once offered a sacrifice for sins as the great High Priest of His people, "forever sat down at the right hand of God"—"a great High-Priest passed through the heavens," "ever living to make intercession for them" (Heb. 10:12; 4:14; 7:25, etc.). So complete are the appliances for the salvation of lost men. Well may the great apostle say, "And ye are complete in Him" (Col. 2:10). In Him every want of their souls is met. H. C.

17. *David shall never want a man.* So long as Israel remained a kingdom, those of the line of David ruled over it; when that failed, Christ came in the flesh, who ruleth, and shall rule, over the Israel of God forever. Poole.—In a spiritual sense, the kingdom of Christ, the Son of David, has been for some time established over those whom the Apostle calls "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16), and "the children of

Abraham" (Gal. 3:7); meaning thereby all true believers, whether of the Jews or of the Gentiles. And in the Church of Christ there hath been a constant and uninterrupted succession of persons appointed to perform the public offices of religion in the room of, although not taken out of the family of the priests, the Levites. And the perpetuity of this kingdom and this priesthood is, in the opinion of many learned expositors, looked upon as a full and authentic completion of the intention of this prophecy. *Blayney.*

17, 18. King and priest in perpetuity. The declarations of these verses come by a natural association after the declaration of His advent who is the righteous Scion of David. Kingship and priesthood in perpetuity—that is the general assurance; but what a difference between the assurance looked at from the point of view given by Jeremiah's time and the point of view given by ours! We look back on the achievements of history, and then see how much more a prediction means than anything that could have been supposed possible at the time it was spoken.

The way in which the perpetuity is manifested. The king is one; the priest is one. Looking back, we are made to see this clearly. "Of His reign there shall be no end," says Gabriel to Mary. Whatever wisdom, power, and beneficence are in Jesus, are in perpetual exercise. Death, which ends the authority of purely human kings, only enlarged and deepened the authority of Jesus. He not only claims perpetuity for His demands, but we have ample reason now to say that the claim is admitted. And as to priesthood, what more need be said than make a reference to the expositions of the priesthood of Jesus made in the Epistle to the Hebrews? It is the priesthood forever, according to the order of Melchisedec. What an abidingly helpful thought it should be that we look to a Mediator ever active in sympathy with human wants, ever understanding them, knowing them indeed far better than the subjects of them! All the externalities are gone—sacrifices of beasts, furnishings of the holy place, symbolic garments of the priests, symbolic ordinances of service; but the reality remains and must remain in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. The deepest evils of human life, the evils that cause all others, are swept away by the priesthood of Jesus. And so also the greatest goods of human life, those that are seminal and full of energy toward the production of other goods, come through the same priesthood. Compared with the possibilities of the

future, the predictions of these verses are, indeed, only at the beginning of their fulfilment. Y.

17-26. Three of God's covenants—that of royalty with David and his seed, that of the priesthood with Aaron and his seed, and that of peculiarity with Abraham and his seed—seemed to have been all broken and lost while the Captivity lasted; but it is here promised that, notwithstanding that interruption and discontinuance for a time, they shall all three take place again, and the true intents and meaning of them all shall be abundantly answered in the New Testament blessings, typified by those conferred on the Jews after their return out of captivity. H.

19-22. Here, as in chap. 31:35-37, the richest promises are confirmed by the strongest assurances. The Lord's covenant of the day and of the night (see Gen. 1 and Ps. 136:8, 9), the Divine constitution of nature whereby the succession of day and night will continue while the world shall stand, is beautifully appropriated as the symbol and the pledge of this never-failing promise respecting the eternal kingship and priesthood of the Messiah. H. C.

The permanence of nature is an assurance of the permanence of grace. The same God rules in the physical and spiritual spheres. In the one He is not capricious and uncertain. Why should we fear His being so in the other? Night, tempest, winter—things dark and wild—do not set aside the eternal ordinances of beneficent nature. The blue sky survives the black cloud that hides it for a season only to reveal it the more clearly after shedding itself in thunder-showers. Why, then, should we think that the heavenly grace of God's love should be less enduring? If the ordinances of nature fail, we may expect the same of the covenant of grace; but not till then, since both depend on the same Divine endurance.

The successions of nature are pledges of the successions of grace. Nature is ever changing, though changing according to uniform laws. In spiritual experience we meet with change. Neither of God's kingdoms is a Chinese empire. Progress marks both; and progress means change. But the change, though it alters events, does not alter principles; it only develops them to fuller exercise. Do the changes of life make us fear the loss of God's blessing? Let us remember that the changes in nature do not upset its laws. Our experience varies, but God's love is changeless. He shows this love, however, rather by a succession of blessings than by maintaining present blessings unaltered. So is it in nature—day and

night, summer and winter, alternate. To-day's grace will not last for to-morrow ; but new grace will be bestowed then if we seek it. The succession does not fail in nature, nor will it in grace. *Adeney.*

26. Christ is that seed of David that is to be perpetual Dictator to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; and as this people shall never want such a king, so this king shall never want such a people. Christianity shall continue in

the dominion of Christ, and the subjection of Christians to Him, till day and night come to an end. And as a pledge of this, that promise is again repeated, I will cause their captivity to return ; and, having brought them back, I will have mercy on them. Whom this promise refers to appears Gal. 6 : 16, where all that walk according to the Gospel rule are made to be the Israel of God, on whom peace and mercy shall be. H.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTERS XXXIV.—XLV.

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JEREMIAH, CHAPTERS XLVI., XLVII.

- 46 : 1** THE word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the nations.
- 2 Of Egypt : concerning the army of Pharaoh-necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah.
- 3, 4 Order ye the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle. Harness the horses, and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with your helmets ; furbish the spears, put on the coats of
- 5 mail. Wherefore have I seen it ? they are dismayed and are turned backward ; and their
- 6 mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back : terror is on every side, saith the LORD. Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape ; in the north by the
- 7 river Euphrates have they stumbled and fallen. Who is this that riseth up like the Nile, whose
- 8 waters toss themselves like the rivers ? Egypt riseth up like the Nile, and his waters toss themselves like the rivers : and he saith, I will rise up, I will cover the earth ; I will destroy the city
- 9 and the inhabitants thereof. Go up, ye horses ; and rage, ye chariots ; and let the mighty men go forth : Cush and Put, that handle the shield ; and the Ludim, that handle and bend
- 10 the bow. For that day is *a day* of the LORD, the LORD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries : and the sword shall devour and be satiate, and shall drink its fill of their blood : for the LORD, the LORD of hosts, hath a sacrifice in the north
- 11 country by the river Euphrates. Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin daughter of
- 12 Egypt : in vain dost thou use many medicines ; there is no healing for thee. The nations have heard of thy shame, and the earth is full of thy cry : for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, they are fallen both of them together.
- 13 The word that the LORD spake to Jeremiah the prophet, how that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon should come and smite the land of Egypt.
- 14 Declare ye in Egypt, and publish in Migdol, and publish in Noph and in Tahpanhes : say ye,
- 15 Stand forth, and prepare thee ; for the sword hath devoured round about thee. Why are thy
- 16 strong ones swept away ? they stood not, because the LORD did drive them. He made many to stumble, yea, they fell one upon another : and they said, Arise, and let us go again to our own
- 17 people, and to the land of our nativity, from the oppressing sword. They cried there, Pharaoh
- 18 king of Egypt is but a noise ; he hath let the appointed time pass by. As I live, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts, surely like Tabor among the mountains, and like Carmel
- 19 by the sea, so shall he come. O thou daughter that dwellest in Egypt, furnish thyself to go into captivity : for Noph shall become a desolation, and shall be burnt up, without inhabi-
- 20 tant. Egypt is a very fair heifer ; *but* destruction out of the north is come, it is come.
- 21 Also her hired men in the midst of her are like calves of the stall ; for they also are turned back, they are fled away together, they did not stand : for the day of their calamity is come upon
- 22 them, the time of their visitation. The sound thereof shall go like the serpent ; for they shall
- 23 march with an army, and come against her with axes, as hewers of wood. They shall cut down her forest, saith the LORD, though it cannot be searched ; because they are more than
- 24 the locusts, and are innumerable. The daughter of Egypt shall be put to shame ; she shall
- 25 be delivered into the hand of the people of the north. The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saith : Behold, I will punish Amon of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with her gods, and her
- 26 kings ; even Pharaoh, and them that trust in him : and I will deliver them into the hand of those that seek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants : and afterwards it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old, saith the
- 27 LORD. But fear not thou, O Jacob my servant, neither be dismayed, O Israel : for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity ; and Jacob shall return,
- 28 and shall be quiet and at ease, and none shall make him afraid. Fear not thou, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD ; for I am with thee : for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee, but I will not make a full end of thee ; but I will correct thee with judgement, and will in no wise leave thee unpunished.

47 : 1 The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the Philistines, before that Pharaoh smote Gaza.

2 Thus saith the LORD : Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall become an overflowing stream, and shall overflow the land and all that is therein, the city and them that dwell therein : and the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl. At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong ones, at the rushing of his chariots, at the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers look not back to their children for feebleness of hands ;
4 because of the day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, to cut off from Tyre and Zidon every helper that remaineth : for the LORD will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the isle of Caphtor. Baldness is come upon Gaza ; Ashkelon is brought to nought, the remnant of her valley : how long wilt thou cut thyself ? O thou sword of the LORD, how long will it be ere thou be quiet ? put up thyself into thy scabbard ; rest, and be still. How canst thou be quiet, seeing the LORD hath given thee a charge ? against Ashkelon, and against the sea shore, there hath he appointed it.

Chaps. 46-51. Compare these prophecies against Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar and Hazor, Elam, Babylon, with similar prophecies of Isa. 13-23 ; Ezek. 25-32 ; Amos 1 : 3-2 : 3. W. J. B.

Chap. 46. In this chapter are two distinct prophecies concerning Egypt. The first (verses 1-12) appears to have been delivered at the time that the Egyptian army lay along the banks of the Euphrates, waiting to oppose the entrance of Nebuchadnezzar into Syria, in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah. The two armies came to an engagement near the city of Carchemish, the same which Pharaoh-necho was going against when he was opposed by King Josiah (2 Chron. 35 : 20). The event of the battle proved very unfortunate to the Egyptians, who were routed with a prodigious slaughter, as is here foretold by the prophet in a very animated style, and with great poetic energy and liveliness of coloring. In the third and fourth verses, the mighty preparations of the Egyptians for war are described, which occasions the prophet, who foresees the defeat, to express his astonishment at an event so contrary to what might have been expected ; but he accounts for it by ascribing it to the disposition of the Almighty, who had spread terror all around, and had decreed that neither swiftness nor strength should avail the owners, so as to save them from the impending overthrow (verses 5, 6). In the verses that follow next, the king of Egypt is represented as beginning his march with all the ostentation and insolence of presumed success. He is compared to a mighty river, the Nile or the Euphrates, when it swells above its banks, and threatens to overwhelm the country with ruin and desolation (verses 7, 8). He is heard calling aloud to the nations of which his army is composed, giving them the signal for action, and rous-

ing them to deeds of desperate valor (verse 9). But all in vain ; the time is come for God to avenge Himself of His ancient foes ; they are doomed to slaughter, to fall a bloody sacrifice on the plains of the north (verse 10). The whole concludes with an apostrophe to the daughter of Egypt, whose wound is pronounced incurable, and her disgrace universally known ; forasmuch as the number of her warriors have served only to augment the general disorder, and more effectually to destroy each other.

1. The word of the Lord, etc. This verse is a general title to the collection of prophecies contained in this and the five following chapters. The nations spoken of are the same as those of which an enumeration is made (chap. 25 : 19-26). These prophecies were not delivered all at the same time. To some the date is annexed ; in others it is left uncertain. *Blayney.*

1-12. In this passage we have the fullest account that has come down to us of one of the most important among the "decisive battles of the world." The contending powers are Egypt and Babylon, the contending princes Neko (Pharaoh-necho), the son of Psamatik I., and Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar—the founder of the second empire of the Chaldeans. Neko, having (in B.C. 608) defeated Josiah, king of Judah, at Megiddo, on the border of the great plain of Esdraelon, pressed forward to meet the "house with which he had war at Carchemish by Euphrates" (2 Chron. 35 : 20). Complete success for the time attended his expedition. He made himself master of the whole tract of territory intervening between the "river of Egypt" (Wady-el-Arish) on the one hand and the river Euphrates on the other (2 K. 24 : 7). Syria in its widest extent, Phœnicia, Philistia and Judea submitted to him. It

seemed as if the days of the Thothmeses and Amenhoteps were about to return, and Egypt to be once more the predominant power in the Eastern world, the "lady of nations," the sovereign at one and the same time of Africa and of Asia. Had Babylon acquiesced in the loss of territory, her prestige would have been gone, and her empire would probably have soon crumbled into dust. Egypt and Media would have stood face to face as the two rivals for supremacy; and possibly the entire course of the world's later history might have been changed.

But Nabopolassar appreciated aright the importance of the crisis, and before Egypt had had time to consolidate her power in the newly conquered provinces, resolved on making a great effort to recover them. In the year B.C. 605—three years after Neko's great success—having collected his troops and made his preparations, he sent his son and heir, Nebuchadnezzar, at the head of a large army, to reconquer the lost territory. Nebuchadnezzar marched upon Carchemish, the strong frontier fortress near the Euphrates, which had originally been the capital of the early Hittite kingdom, and the site of which is now marked by the ruins called "Jerablus" or "Jerabus." Here he found Neko encamped at the head of a considerable force, in part, no doubt, Egyptians, but mainly Ethiopians, Libyans and Græco-Carians from Asia Minor, perhaps the "Lydians" of Jeremiah (verse 9). The battle poetically described by Jeremiah was fought. The Egyptian force of foot, horse and chariots was completely defeated; a great carnage took place (verse 10); and the few survivors fled away in dismay (verse 5), evacuating province after province, and retiring within their own frontier. Nebuchadnezzar followed on their traces, at least as far south as Jerusalem, where he received the submission of Jehoiakim (2 K. 24:1), and from which he carried off a portion of the Temple treasures (Dan. 1:1). He would probably have gone further and invaded Egypt had not the news reached him (late in B.C. 605) of his father's decease, which necessitated his own immediate return to his capital. Accompanied by a small force lightly equipped, he crossed the desert by way of Damascus and Tadmor, while the heavy-armed troops, the baggage, and the prisoners made their way to Babylon by the usual but circuitous route, down the valley of the Orontes, across Northern Syria to Carchemish, and then along the banks of the Euphrates.

We have one profane account of this expedi-

tion, entering far less into details than Jeremiah, but in complete accord with his statements, and supplying various points of interest, which have been worked into the above narrative. The Babylonian historian, Berosus, as quoted by Josephus, says, speaking of Nebuchadnezzar: "When his father, Nabopolassar, heard that the satrap appointed to govern Egypt, and the districts of Coelestria and Phœnicia, had revolted from him, as he was not himself able any longer to endure hardships, he assigned a certain portion of his army to his son, Nebuchadnezzar, who was in the flower of his youth, and sent him against the rebel. And when Nebuchadnezzar had fallen in with him, and engaged him in battle, he defeated him, and from this beginning proceeded to bring the country under his own rule. Now it chanced that his father, Nabopolassar, just at this time fell sick, and departed this life, having reigned one-and-twenty years. Nebuchadnezzar shortly after heard of his father's decease, and, having arranged the affairs of Egypt and the other countries, and appointed certain of his friends to conduct to Babylon the captives which he had taken from the Jews, the Phœnicians, the Syrians and the parts about Egypt, together with the heavy-armed troops and the baggage, started himself with a very small escort, and, travelling by the way of the wilderness, reached Babylon." G. R.

2. Carchemish. This great battle was the first decisive exploit of the young prince, Nebuchadnezzar. The latter followed up his great victory with energy; drove the vanquished Egyptians back to Egypt; himself subdued Syria and indeed most of the powers of Western Asia; came upon Jerusalem and subjugated it in this very year, the fourth of Jehoiakim; and then returning home, ascended the throne recently made vacant by the death of his father. The entire political aspect of Asia was suddenly changed.

11, 12. The fatal blow has fallen on Egypt! You may see it in the changed tone of the prophet's graphic touches: "Let Egypt go to Gilead and take balm thence to heal her deep and deadly wounds!" But all Gilead can avail her nothing! All the nations hear of her hopeless defeat.

13-15. Suddenly the scene changes. We are no longer at Carchemish on the Euphrates, but in Egypt itself. The victor there is the invader and conqueror here. At no long interval Nebuchadnezzar follows his smitten foe to his own cities to chastise and subjugate him more thoroughly. In the usual manner of the

prophets when predicting an invasion, Jeremiah summons Egypt to be in readiness for the devouring sword, and but too plainly intimates that her valiant men will be swept away. God is against them; how can they stand? H. C.

15. *The real cause of the decline of empires.* "Because the Lord did drive them." If we read ordinary histories, the overthrow of any monarchy is traced to such an invasion or to the loss of such a battle, or to some other ordinary and well-known cause. And no doubt it is true that, through and by these things, the results have been brought about. But there is ever a moral cause which lies behind, and it is to that must be traced up the series of events which have followed. The history of most ancient empires, in their origin, progress, decline and fall, has been very much the same. A hardy, temperate, courageous people, driven by necessity or attracted by the hope of gain, fall upon some decrepit power, destroy it, and on its ruins build their own fortunes. For a while the same courage and virtue which enabled them to gain possession of their prize are manifested in consolidating their power and in building up their rule. But after the lapse of years, they have gained secure foothold, and are able to live less on their guard against enemies. Wealth and luxury increase and exert their enervating power. In this soil the vices, whatever they may be, to which as a people they are predisposed, grow rapidly and affect the national habit and character. Then their decay has begun. It hastens rapidly on until, in their turn, this once victorious people are vanquished, overthrown by a nation more bold and righteous and therefore more powerful than themselves. This law can be readily traced in the histories of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and in more modern instances as well. P. C.

The sufficient reason is found in the action of Jehovah. Jehovah drove them. All forces that find expression in matter are completely at God's disposal. He can paralyze the mightiest army in a moment. The mighty man is not to glory in his might (chap. 9:23). True it is that God lets the strong man do generally all his strength permits him to do. The success military men look for is on the side of the strongest battalions. But then all strength of this sort fails against spiritual strength. Not all the armies of Rome and not all the wild beasts of the amphitheatre could persuade a single true Christian to forsake Christ. The strength of this world achieves great things in its own field, but directly it goes beyond and tries to inter-

fere with conscience and spiritual aspirations, its weakness is made manifest. Y.

18. The great King, Jehovah of hosts, solemnly affirms that thy destroyer, O Egypt, shall come with surpassing majesty and power, as Tabor stands pre-eminently glorious among the mountains and Carmel by the sea; therefore prepare for going into captivity. The point of the comparison is Nebuchadnezzar, in pre-eminence and power like Tabor and Carmel. Tabor lifts its summit seventeen hundred and fifty-five feet, and Carmel fifteen hundred above the level of the Mediterranean. With majesty befitting the subject, God assumes here the descriptive epithet, "The King, whose name is Jehovah of hosts." Being King of the hosts of heaven, why should He not also be recognized as King of nations in this lower world? So also chaps. 48:15; 51:57.

25, 26. This poetic and boldly descriptive prophecy closes here with a very plain statement of the main facts of the case. God will bring terrible judgments upon the great and idolatrous cities of Egypt; upon all those idol-gods and "upon all who put their trust in her"—which last clause refers plainly to the Jews, and especially to that last feeble remnant whose history we followed in chaps. 41-44. The passage closes with an intimation that the control of the Chaldeans over Egypt would ultimately cease and better days return. H. C.

26. *Punishment not destruction, but purification and preservation.* In verse 28, in chap. 48:21, and in chap. 49:6, 39, we have similar assurances that "afterward," when God's judgments have done their work, the chastised and afflicted nations shall be restored. Such promise is here made to Egypt. It is repeated in Ezek. 29:8-14. And from this reiterated word, concerning not one people only, but so many, we gather the intent and purpose of God in regard to all His punishments which He sends upon men—that they are not for men's destruction, but for their purification and preservation. C.

27, 28. *God's care of His own.* *The need of the fullest possible assurance.* Jehovah, who has visited Israel with many and great sufferings, will also visit other peoples. Egypt is spoken of in this chapter; and Philistia, Moab, Ammon and Babylon in following chapters. Hence the need of Divine words such as would keep the believing element in Israel calm and confident through all these disturbances, and so it ever is meant to be with the true Israel of God. God is ready with comforting words amid the necessary turmoil of external conditions.

The solid grounds of this assurance. They lie in Jehovah's continued connection with Israel, and His purposes for its safety, peace and prosperity. We have no assurance in ourselves or our circumstances, but the moment we can feel that we are in God's hands, that He has plans with respect to us and a future preparing for us, then assurance is possible. God never tells man to take courage and put away fear without giving good reason for the exhortation, and showing that fear is rather the unreasonable feeling to allow. The moment we can take in the full force of that wonderful word, "I am with thee," then we are freed from alarms and from dependence on the shifting phenomena of this present life.

The difference God will make between Israel and other nations. A full end is to be made of them. And a full end has been made of them. Here, of course, the distinction must be borne in mind between nations and the individuals composing them. A nation is but a certain arrangement of human beings, and this arrangement may be productive of such wrong feelings and such danger to the world as to make it fitting that the nation should cease. But the people composing the nation remain, and their descendants pass into new and better combinations. So with regard to Israel; the people who are to return and be in rest and without fear, the people who are not to be made a full end of, are those of whom literal Israel is but the type. There are really but two nations in the world—those who believe in God and in His Son, and show their faith by their works; and those who trust in themselves, in their power and their purposes. Of all these latter God must make a full end, if in no other way by bringing them to see their folly, so that they may turn to the ways of faith.

Jehovah's chastisement of His own even while He protects them. There is a purpose in all suffering, a real need for it. Men seem to be mixed up indiscriminately, and suffering looks as if it often fell irrespective of character, but this is only a seeming. The suffering of Israel, though it may look the same outwardly, is really as different as possible from the suffering of Egypt. There is a fire which ends in the destruction of what passes through it. It must be so, for the thing is destructible and shows its nature when the fire tries it. The same fire attacking indestructible things only separates destructible accretions from them, and consumes these accretions away. God's intention is that the believer may be able to say, "I cannot be destroyed in this furnace of

trials; I cannot go to pieces as others do. But still I must remain in it for a while; I must submit to God's wise ordinances, so that at last I may return to my true rest and fear no more forever." Y.

The preservation of the Jews through so many ages, and the total destruction of their enemies, are wonderful events; and are made still more wonderful by being signified beforehand by the spirit of prophecy, as particularly in the passage before us. Their preservation is really one of the most illustrious acts of Divine providence. They are dispersed among all nations, yet not confounded with any. The drops of rain which fall, nay the great rivers which flow into the ocean, are soon mingled with and lost in that immense body of waters. And the same, in all human probability, would have been the fate of the Jews; they would have been mingled and lost in the common mass of mankind; but, on the contrary, they flow into all parts of the world, mix with all nations, and yet keep separate from all. They still live as a distinct people; and yet they nowhere live according to their own laws, nowhere elect their own magistrates, nowhere enjoy the full exercise of their religion. Their solemn feasts and sacrifices are limited to one certain place; and that hath been now for many ages in the hands of strangers and aliens, who will not suffer them to come thither. No people have continued unmixed so long as they have done; not only of those who have sent colonies into foreign countries, but even of those who have abided in their own country. The northern nations have come in swarms into the more southern parts of Europe; but where are they now to be discerned and distinguished? The Gauls went forth in great bodies to seek their fortune in foreign parts; but what traces or footsteps of them are now remaining anywhere? In France, who can separate the race of the ancient Gauls from the various other people who from time to time have settled there? In Spain, who can distinguish between the first possessors, the Spaniards, and the Goths and Moors, who conquered and kept possession of the country for some ages? In England, who can pretend to say certainly which families are derived from the ancient Britons, and which from the Romans, Saxons, Danes, and Normans? The most ancient and honorable pedigrees can be traced up only to a certain period; and beyond that there is nothing but conjecture and uncertainty, obscurity and ignorance. But the Jews can go up higher than any nation; they can even deduce their pedigree from the

beginning of the world. They may not know from what particular tribe or family they are descended ; but they know certainly that they all sprang from the stock of Abraham. And yet the contempt with which they have been treated, and the hardships they have undergone in almost all countries, should, one would think, have made them desirous to forget or renounce their original ; but they profess it ; they glory in it ; and after so many wars, massacres and persecutions, they still subsist ; they are still very numerous. And what but a supernatural power could have preserved them in such a manner, as no other nation upon earth has been preserved ? Nor is the providence of God less remarkable in the destruction of their enemies than in their own preservation. For, from the beginning, who have been the great enemies and oppressors of the Jewish nation, removed them from their own land and compelled them into captivity and slavery ? The Egyptians afflicted them much, and detained them in bondage several years. The Assyrians carried away captive the Ten Tribes of Israel ; and the Babylonians afterward the two remaining tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The Syro-Macedonians, especially Antiochus Epiphanes, cruelly persecuted them ; and the Romans utterly dissolved the Jewish state, and dispersed the people so as that they have never been able to recover their city and country again. And where are now these great and famous monarchies, which in their turn subdued and oppressed the people of God ? Are they not vanished as a dream ; and not only their power, but their very names, lost in the earth ? The Egyptians, Assyrians and Babylonians were overthrown and entirely subjugated by the Persians ; and the Persians, it is remarkable, were the restorers of the Jews as well as the destroyers of their enemies. The Syro-Macedonians were swallowed up by the Romans ; and the Roman Empire, great and powerful as it was, was broken into pieces by the incursions of the northern nations ; while the Jews are subsisting as a distinct people at this day. And what a wonder of Providence is it, that the vanquished should so many ages survive the victors ; and the former be spread all over the world, while the latter are no more ? *Bp. Newton.*

Chap. 47. This short chapter is devoted to the Philistines—for several centuries the formidable border enemies of the Hebrew people on the west and southwest. They come in the same order here (next after Egypt) as in chap. 25 : 19, 20. Several other prophets speak of the fall of the Philistine principalities—*e.g.*,

Ezek. 25 : 15-17 ; Amos 1 : 6-8 ; Zeph. 2 : 4-7 ; Zech. 9 : 5-7.

1-7. As the Egyptians had often proved false friends, so the Philistines had always been sworn enemies to the Israel of God and the more dangerous and vexatious for their being such near neighbors to them. They were considerably humbled in David's time, but, it seems, they had got head again, and were a considerable people till Nebuchadnezzar cut them off with their neighbors, which is the event here foretold. The date of this prophecy is observable ; it was before Pharaoh smote Gaza ; when this blow was given to Gaza by the king of Egypt is not certain, whether in his expedition against Carchemish, or in his return thence, after he had slain Josiah, or when he afterward came with design to relieve Jerusalem ; but this is mentioned here to show that this word of the Lord came to Jeremiah against the Philistines when they were in their full strength and lustre, themselves and their cities in good condition. **H.**

1. The historical allusion, " Before Pharaoh smote Gaza," has been explained by critics variously. Among these various opinions, none seems to me more probable than that of Rosenmüller, who thinks it was Pharaoh-necho, and that the time was before his battle with Josiah at Meggido (2 K. 23 : 29), and perhaps when on his way from Egypt to the Euphrates. At this time the Chaldean power had not yet risen to formidable proportions. Carchemish fell into the hands of this same Necho soon afterward, and no human sagacity could foresee that the Chaldeans from the north country would ever overpower and desolate the cities of the Philistines. Their danger seemed to lie in the opposite direction—*i.e.*, from Egypt on the south. These circumstances suggest a pertinent reason for this note as to the point of time *before* which the prophecy was revealed.

2, 3. A flood of waters, coming down with the power of a deluge, is a common and pertinent figure for an invading and conquering army. Here it refers to the Chaldeans. So terrible will be the tramp of his cavalry and the thunder of his chariots, that, under the general consternation, fathers in their flight will not look back after their children, being consciously too feeble to afford them any protection or help. **H. C.**

4. *To cut off from Tyrus and Zidon.* The siege of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, which lasted thirteen years, was an action famous in the history of that age. (See Ezek. 27, 28.) Zidon partook of the same fate as Tyre, both in pros-

perity and in adversity. (See Isa. 23 : 2, 4.) And her destruction is joined with that of Tyre by Ezekiel (chap. 28). *W. Lowth.*

The remnant of the country of Caphtor. The Caphtorim, as well as the Philistim, are said to have been descended from Mizraim, the father of the Egyptians. (See Gen. 10 : 14.) They expelled the Avim from that part of Philistia which is contiguous to Gaza, and fixed themselves there (De. 2 : 23) ; on which account the country was afterward called "the country of Caphtor." "The remnant of the country of Caphtor" is therefore to be understood of the few that remained out of a great number that formerly dwelt in that part of Philistia. *Blayney.*

5. Gaza is one of the oldest cities known to history. It appears (Gen. 10 : 19) as one of the border cities of the Canaanites ; it is standing to-day with more population than Jerusalem. It has a record in New Testament history (Acts 8 : 26) ; it figured conspicuously during the crusades ; and since the days of Abraham has never ceased to be a city of very considerable strength and importance. Ashkelon, the most western among the great cities of the Philistines, close on the sea-coast, is spoken of as suffering severely, "being cut off." Little of it remains to this day, though its site is known with reasonable certainty. It has long since "been cut off" as to any political power or importance.

6, 7. This bold apostrophe to the sword of the Lord is exquisitely beautiful. The prophet

sees in the future a series of fearful devastations coming on those doomed cities of the Philistines ; his poetic genius conceives of the Lord's instrument as itself living, conscious and responsible, and he cries out, "O thou sword of the Lord, why not desist from that work of slaughter ? How long ere thou wilt rest ? Betake thyself to thy scabbard, rest, and be still." Then the spirit of prophecy shuts off the possibility of this, and the prophet gives us his outlook into the future in these expressive words, "How can it rest, seeing the Lord hath given it a commission against Ashkelon and the cities along the seashore ? It must execute the will of God !" The poetic beauty and indeed the moral power of these verses have rarely been surpassed by any of the old Hebrew prophets. *H. C.*

At first the answer of the prophet appears little other than a repetition of the Philistines' thought ; but it is far more. *This is not blind fate, but judgment strictly meted out and determined. It declares, in effect, that the wicked cannot be suffered to remain on the earth.* They must be subjects of continual and exterminating judgment. There is no escape so long as they remain impenitent and at a distance from Him. Is it contradictory, then, for Zechariah to prophesy the *conversion* of the Philistines ? The rightful end of judgment is mercy. The sinner is driven into the arms of the Divine love. Our helplessness prepares for the reception of His salvation. *M.*

JEREMIAH, CHAPTER XLVIII.

48 : 1 OF Moab. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel : Woe unto Nebo ! for it is laid waste ; Kiriathaim is put to shame, it is taken : Misgab is put to shame and broken down. The praise of Moab is no more ; in Heshbon they have devised evil against her, Come, and let us cut her off from being a nation. Thou also, O Madmen, shalt be brought to silence ; the sword shall pursue thee. The sound of a cry from Horonaim, spoiling and great destruction ! Moab is destroyed ; her little ones have caused a cry to be heard. For by the ascent of Luhith with continual weeping shall they go up ; for in the going down of Horonaim they have heard the distress of the cry of destruction. Flee, save your lives, and be like the heath in the wilderness. For, because thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou also shalt be taken : and Chemosh shall go forth into captivity, his priests and his princes together. And the spoiler shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape ; the valley also shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed ; as the LORD hath spoken. Give wings unto Moab, that she may fly and get her away : and her cities shall become a desolation, without any to dwell therein. Cursed be he that doeth the work of

11 the LORD negligently, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood. Moab
 hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied
 from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity : therefore his taste remaineth in
 12 him, and his scent is not changed. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I
 will send unto him them that pour off, and they shall pour him off ; and they shall empty
 13 his vessels, and break their bottles in pieces. And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the
 14 house of Israel was ashamed of Beth-el their confidence. How say ye, We are mighty men,
 15 and valiant men for the war ? Moab is laid waste, and they are gone up into her cities, and
 his chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, saith the King, whose name is the
 16, 17 LORD of hosts. The calamity of Moab is near to come, and his affliction hasteth fast. All
 ye that are round about him, bemoan him, and all ye that know his name ; say, How is the
 18 strong staff broken, the beautiful rod ! O thou daughter that dwellest in Dibon, come down
 from thy glory, and sit in thirst ; for the spoiler of Moab is come up against thee, he hath
 19 destroyed thy strong holds. O inhabitant of Aroer, stand by the way, and espy : ask him
 20 that fleeth, and her that escapeth ; say, What hath been done ? Moab is put to shame ; for
 21 it is broken down : howl and cry ; tell ye it in Arnon, that Moab is laid waste. And judge-
 ment is come upon the plain country ; upon Holon, and upon Jahzah, and upon Mephaath ;
 22, 23 and upon Dibon, and upon Nebo, and upon Beth-diblahaim ; and upon Kiriathaim, and
 24 upon Beth-gamul, and upon Beth-meon ; and upon Kerioth, and upon Bozrah, and upon all
 25 the cities of the land of Moab, far or near. The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is bro-
 26 ken, saith the LORD. Make ye him drunken ; for he magnified himself against the LORD :
 27 and Moab shall wallow in his vomit, and he also shall be in derision. For was not Israel a
 derision unto thee ? was he found among thieves ? for as often as thou speakest of him, thou
 28 waggest the head. O ye inhabitants of Moab, leave the cities, and dwell in the rock ; and be
 29 like the dove that maketh her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth. We have heard of the
 pride of Moab, that he is very proud ; his loftiness, and his pride, and his arrogancy, and the
 30 haughtiness of his heart. I know his wrath, saith the LORD, that it is nought ; his boastings
 31 have wrought nothing. Therefore will I howl for Moab ; yea, I will cry out for all Moab :
 for the men of Kir-heres shall they mourn. With more than the weeping of Jazer will I weep
 32 for thee, O vine of Sibmah : thy branches passed over the sea, they reached even to the sea
 33 of Jazer : upon thy summer fruits and upon thy vintage the spoiler is fallen. And gladness
 and joy is taken away, from the fruitful field and from the land of Moab ; and I have caused
 wine to cease from the winepresses : none shall tread with shouting ; the shouting shall be
 34 no shouting. From the cry of Heshbon even unto Elealeh, even unto Jahaz have they
 uttered their voice, from Zoar even unto Horonaim, to Eglath-shelishiyah : for the waters of
 35 Nimrim also shall become desolate. Moreover I will cause to cease in Moab, saith the LORD,
 36 him that offereth in the high place, and him that burneth incense to his gods. Therefore mine
 heart soundeth for Moab like pipes, and mine heart soundeth like pipes for the men of Kir-heres :
 37 therefore the abundance that he hath gotten is perished. For every head is bald, and every
 38 beard clipped : upon all the hands are cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth. On all the
 housetops of Moab and in the streets thereof there is lamentation every where : for I have
 39 broken Moab like a vessel wherein is no pleasure, saith the LORD. How is it broken down !
 how do they howl ! how hath Moab turned the back with shame ! so shall Moab become a
 40 derision and a dismaying to all that are round about him. For thus saith the LORD : Behold,
 41 he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread out his wings against Moab. Kerioth is taken, and
 the strong holds are surprised, and the heart of the mighty men of Moab at that day shall be
 42 as the heart of a woman in her pangs. And Moab shall be destroyed from being a people,
 43 because he hath magnified himself against the LORD. Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are
 44 upon thee, O inhabitant of Moab, saith the LORD. He that fleeth from the fear shall fall into
 the pit ; and he that getteth up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare : for I will bring
 45 upon her, even upon Moab, the year of their visitation, saith the LORD. They that fled stand
 without strength under the shadow of Heshbon : for a fire is gone forth out of Heshbon, and
 a flame from the midst of Sihon, and hath devoured the corner of Moab, and the crown of the
 46 head of the tumultuous ones. Woe unto thee, O Moab ! the people of Chemosh is undone :
 47 for thy sons are taken away captive, and thy daughters into captivity. Yet will I bring
 again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the LORD. Thus far is the judgement
 of Moab.

Chap. 48. The succession of pictures of approaching judgment which Jeremiah draws are not monotonous repetitions of the same description. They are definite and distinctively applicable to the respective subjects of them.

The grounds of this judgment are given in the revelation of the sins of Moab. The head and front of her offence is *pride* (e.g., verse 29). Other characteristics are closely related—viz. : *trust in wealth and material resources* (verse 7) ; *self-indulgent ease* (verse 11) ; *boastfulness* (verse 14) ; *scorn* (verse 27) ; *defiance of heaven* (verse 26). Such a catalogue of offences is peculiarly hateful to God. Sins of appetite and passion are partly the result of weakness. The culpability of them is less than that of the intellectual and spiritual sins by all the weight of temptations which arise out of the natural constitution of man. For such sins as those of Moab there is no excuse. They are nearest to the most diabolical wickedness. Adam fell by a sin of appetite ; Satan by a sin of spiritual pride. *Adeney.*

3-6. The outcries of warriors spoiling her cities and the bitter wails of the spoiled and fleeing people are heard throughout the land. Luhith, on the side of the mountain as the fugitives ascended, and Horonaim, on the other side where they descended, are here named in connection to say that this sorrowful troop wept as they went up, and wailed as on the other side they went down. H. C.

7. Trusted in thy treasures. Riches are not evil things in themselves. The gifts of God in nature, or the fruits of man's industry, they are valuable just because they have in them some serviceableness for human wants. Money is not the root of all evil, but the love of it (1 Tim. 6 : 10). It is they who trust in riches who find it impossible to enter into the kingdom of God (Mark 10 : 24). But riches are snares, and the possessor of them had need beware of the dangers they necessarily bring. When the servant becomes a god the degraded worshipper is on the road to ruin. Before God we are judged by what we are, and by our use of gifts. *Adeney.*

7-9. Moab had probably trusted in her great exploits and in her accumulated treasures. Therefore is she doomed to be taken forcibly by her enemies. Chemosh was the national god of Moab (see 1 K. 11 : 7 ; 2 K. 23 : 13), whose worship Solomon introduced and Josiah exterminated. That the god himself, with his priests and princes, together goes into captivity, is a triumph of Jehovah over them to show all people their utter vanity.

10. Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently. The case contemplated is not that of one who pretends to do the work better than he actually does, but of him who fails to do it vigorously and effectually, as the last clause being parallel shows—"who" through false pity "restrains his sword from blood." The spirit of the Lord and consequently of His prophet is fired with the sense of justice and its now inexorable demands. The Moabites must fall, and woe to him whom God appoints as His executioner if he shrink from his work ! The passage reminds us of Judges 5 : 23 : "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord ; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof ; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." H. C.

God executes His judgments upon sinners by the ministry of men, and those oftentimes as great sinners as those that suffer. He had declared by Jeremiah His purpose of making the Chaldeans His instruments in punishing the Jews and the neighboring countries. (See chap. 25 : 9.) Their success answered the prediction, and Nebuchadnezzar seems to have looked upon Jeremiah as a prophet, and had a particular regard to his character. (See chap. 39 : 11.) Being thus assured that he had a commission from God, he might confidently proceed in his conquests, and it would have been a fault to have shown mercy to those whom he had good reason to believe that God had marked out for destruction. *W. Lowth.*

Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently, that pretends to do it, but does it not to purpose, makes a show of serving God's glory, but is really serving his own ends, and carries on the work of the Lord no farther than will suit his own purposes ; or that is slothful in business for God, and takes neither care nor pains to do it as it should be done (Mal. 1 : 14). Let not such deceive themselves, for God will not thus be mocked.

Moab at ease from his youth. He has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, has not known any troublesome weakening changes, but is as wine kept on the lees, and not racked or drawn off, by which it retains its strength and body. He has not been unsettled nor any way made uneasy ; he has not gone into captivity, as Israel had often done, and yet Moab is a wicked, idolatrous nation, and one of the confederates against God's hidden ones (Ps. 83 : 6). There are many that persist in unpented iniquity, and yet enjoy uninterrupted prosperity. Note, while bad people are as

happy as they used to be in the world, it is no marvel if they are as bad as they used to be. They have no changes of their peace and prosperity, therefore they fear not God, their hearts and lives are unchanged (Ps. 55 : 19). H.

During two centuries and a half Moab regained all, and more than all, of its former prosperity. For the land was beautiful and rich in the extreme. Its pastures were covered over with sheep and its valleys with corn. The very name "Moab" is thought to mean the land of desire—that is, the desirable land. Now, during these long periods, the description here given is applicable. They had enjoyed much ease, and the natural evils engendered by their cruel, idolatrous system had become more fixed and settled; "their scent had not changed." The truth, therefore, which is here taught is that prolonged and abundant ease, however coveted by men, is full of peril to their higher nature, and tends continually to the deterioration of character and the hardening of the habit of evil. C.

There is a reference here to wine, or to the process by which it is prepared and finished. It is first expressed from the grape, when it is a thick, discolored fluid or juice. It is then fermented, passing through a process that separates the impurities, and settles them as lees at the bottom. Standing thus upon its lees or dregs in some large tun or vat, it is not further improved. A gross and coarse flavor remains, and the scent of the feculent matter stays by and becomes fastened, as it were, in the body of the wine itself. To separate this, and so to soften or refine the quality, it is now decanted or drawn off into separate jars or skins. After awhile it is done again, and then again; and so, being emptied from vessel to vessel, the last remains of the lees or sediment are finally cleared, the crude flavors are reduced, the scent itself is refined by ventilation, and the perfect character is finished.

So it has not been, the prophet says, with Moab. He hath been at ease from the first, shaken by no great overturnings or defeats, humbled and broken by no captivities, ventilated by no surprising changes or adversities. He has lived on, from age to age, in comparative security, settled on his lees; and therefore he has made no improvement. What he was, he still is; his taste remains in him, and the scent of his old idolatries and barbarities of custom is not changed. Accordingly the prophet goes on to declare, in the verses that follow, that God will now deal with him in a manner better adapted to his want; that He will cause him

to wander, empty his vessels, break his bottles, give him all the agitation he needs, and so will make him to be ashamed of the idolatries of Chemosh, even as Israel was made ashamed of Bethel, their confidence.

There has all along been a kind of mental reference, it will be seen, in his language, to the singular contrast between Moab and Israel, which here in these last words comes out. Israel, the covenanted people, have had no such easy and quiet sort of history. They have been wanderers, in a sense, all the while; shaken loose or unsettled every few years by some great change or adversity; by a state of slavery in Egypt, by a fifty years' roving and fighting in the wilderness, by a time of dreadful anarchy under the Judges, by overthrows and judgments under the Kings, by a revolt and separation of the kingdom, then by a captivity, then by another; and so, while Moab, heaved and loosened by no such changes, has retained the scent of its old customs and abominations, Israel has become quite another people. The calves of Bethel were long ago renounced; the low superstitions, the coarse and sensual habit, all the idolatrous fashions and affinities which corrupted their religion, have been gradually fined away.

The principle that underlies the text is one that may be universalized in its applications. It is this: *That we require to be unsettled in life by many changes and interruptions of adversity, in order to be most effectually loosened from our own evils, and prepared to the will and work of God.* We need, in other words, to be shaken out of our places and plans, agitated, emptied from vessel to vessel, else the flavors of our grossness and impurity remain. We cannot be refined on our lees, or in any course of life that is uniformly prosperous and secure. The very scheme of life appears to be itself a grand decanting process, where change follows change, and all are emptied from vessel to vessel. Here and there a man, like Moab, stands upon his lees, and commonly with the same effect. Fire, flood, famine, sickness in all forms and guises, wait upon us, seen or unseen, and we run the gauntlet through them, calling it life. And the design appears to be to turn us hither and thither, allowing us no chance to stagnate in any sort of benefit or security. Even the most successful, who seem, in one view, to go straight on to their mark, get on after all, rather by a dexterous and continual shifting, so as to keep their balance and exactly meet the changing conditions that befall them. Nor is there anything to sentimentalize over in this ever-shift-

ing, overturning process, which must be encountered in all the works of life; no place for sighing—vanity of vanities. There is no vanity in it, more than in the mill that winnows and separates the grain. *Bushnell.*

Steady sunshine is ruinous. Jeremiah explains the profitlessness of Moab by saying that "Moab had been at ease from his youth, had settled upon his lees, never been emptied from vessel to vessel, never gone into captivity." We have to be shaken out of the stupefying routine of quietness. "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God," wrote David. Earthly splendors eclipse the celestial, just as the sun that hangs comparatively close by so fills our eyes with near light that we know nothing, *till after nightfall*, of the larger suns that blaze out in the deeps of the sky. We touch things celestial and Divine when the air is not loaded with things human and earthly. The bruised flower yields the sweetest perfume, and the finest poetry of the Church has been inspired in seasons of persecution. Horace Bushnell once said: "I have learned more of experimental religion since my little boy died than in all my life before." It was he also that wrote, "Deserts and stone-pillows prepare for an open heaven and an angel-crowded ladder." John did not receive his revelations till he was shut up in little sea-girt Patmos. Paul's most jubilant epistle was written in jail; as birds sometimes have their cage darkened in order to teach them to sing. We often pray that God would enable us to bear adversity; there is quite as much need of His grace to keep us from falling in seasons of prosperity. C. H. P.

12. Possessions give opportunities of service, opportunities denied to many who see the needs of others, have the will to meet them and lack the power. Is it not a righteous thing that God should deal severely with those whose circumstances give them the means and the time for doing great good, and yet who fill their lives with selfish pleasure? Such lives will come out at last in pitiable contrast with what they might have been. Note how the vessels that should have been used toward the perfection of the wine, and the bottles that should have held them, become at last useless. If we will not use our opportunities for God's purpose, God will secure, in due time, that we should not use them for our own. Y.

13. *Betrayed by their gods.* This statement, as it is more especially from the religious standpoint, is a generalization of the cause of Moab's ruin, full of spiritual insight and sagacity. It

is in such directions as these we are to seek for the reasons of human success or failure; everything else is but superficial. The true causes of human success or failure, happiness or misery, are of a moral or spiritual kind. M.

14-17. The destruction is here further prophesied of very largely, and with a great copiousness and variety of expression, and in moving language, designed not only to awaken them by a national repentance and reformation to prevent the trouble, or by a personal repentance and reformation to prepare for it, but to affect us with the calamitous state of human life which is liable to such lamentable occurrences, and with the power of God's anger and the terror of His judgments when He comes forth to contend with a provoking people. H.

15. All in vain are their boasts of might or strength for war. With exquisite beauty and force these words are said to be the words of "the King, that great King of nations, whose name is Jehovah of hosts." The Lord of the armies of heaven, the Captain of that vast celestial host of starry worlds, may well speak with majesty of the fall of a power so small and yet so proud as Moab. (Cf. chap. 46:18; 51:57; Isa. 47:4; 48:2.) H. C.

17. Our visions are dull; our conceptions are material, and we judge from what we see with our natural eye, and we think of heaven as very far away, and of those who leave us here as gone forever from our sight. And when some illustrious servant of God lays down his battered armor, and his shield and spear, bruised and broken in the conflict, to go up to the presence of the King, and be crowned, and enter upon his kingdom, we cry out in our sorrow and tears: "How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod!"

We too often fail to read God's providence in the light of the world to come. We do not avail ourselves of the light God gives us to interpret what else is so dark and mysterious. We look to poor human reason alone, and are sadly misled in matters that are vastly above all reason and all natural light. We try to look at the outer court, and find all mysteries solved there, and forget the glory of the inner sanctuary, deluged with light and with the clear revelation of God. We weep over the present and forget the joy of the future. We place our faces in the dust of earth and cry out, "How dark this world is," and forget to look up at the stars, where the glory of the Lord is revealed. When we cry out, How is the strong staff broken, in regard to the depart-

ure of God's servants, we forget that God has said, "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." We forget that the beautiful rod instead of being broken and thrown away has budded more beautifully in the House of the Lord than did that of Aaron in the Tabernacle, and is stronger and more beautiful in heaven than it could be upon the earth. Earth is but the training school of heaven. The redeemed of the Lord are on the earth prepared for their work in heaven. And as true life only dawns when the gates of immortality are thrown open, so the full service only commences when God's people pass through this gate, and look upon God, and see His kingdom in all its length and breadth and beauty and glory! Oh, not broken, but made strong is the staff, when the sweet, restful change comes! Still more beautiful and glorious is the beautiful rod, when the curtain is rolled away that separates between the holy place of this life and the Holy of Holies of the life to come. *S. J. M. Eaton.*

19-24. The whole plain of Moab is spread out before us, and wherever we turn our eyes, deserted towns and villages are seen. *Bozrah* is on the west, some twelve miles distant—an old road running toward it straight as an arrow. The town of *Beth-gamul*, now *Um-el-Jemal*, is faintly visible far away on the southwest. In the plain immediately to the south are several deserted villages. South by west, about three miles off, is the high hill *Abd-el-Maaz*, with a deserted town on its eastern declivity. To the southeast, the ancient road runs straight across the plain, far as the eye can see. About two hours along it, on the summit of a hill, is a deserted town, called *Malah*. On the segment of the plain, from south to east, I counted fourteen large villages, none of them more than twelve miles distant, and almost all of them, so far as I could see with a telescope, still habitable, like *Sulkhad*, but *entirely deserted*. Not less than thirty deserted sites can be counted from this commanding spot. Well may we exclaim, with the prophet, as we look over this scene of utter desolation, "Moab is confounded; for it is broken down; howl and cry: tell ye it in *Arnon*, that Moab is spoiled, and judgment is come upon the plain-country: upon *Beth-gamul*, and upon *Beth-meon*, and upon *Kerioth*, and upon *Bozrah*, and upon all the cities of Moab far and near." *J. L. Porter.*

28-30. In verse 29 the accumulation of words denoting pride and arrogance is remarkable. In this connection the word in verse 30 rendered "wrath" seems to mean the outburst

and overflowing of scorn. It does indeed usually mean "wrath," but its primary sense is of what overleaps due bounds, is excessive, outbreathing; and in such a connection as this should refer to his insolence. In the latter part of this verse, the words rendered "not so" mean, *not sound, right—i.e., empty and vain*; thus: "I know his insolence, saith the Lord, and the vanity (unsoundness) of his lying boasts ('lies'); they do all things vainly, proudly. In this rendering I change the principal pause so as to attach the word "lies" to the middle clause rather than to the last. In this construction, the passage has a pertinent and forcible significance. *H. C.*

29. The sin which they had been most notoriously guilty of, and for which God now reckoned with them, was pride. It is mentioned six times (verse 29). We have all heard of the pride of Moab; his neighbors took notice of it; it has testified to his face, as Israel's did, he is exceeding proud, and grows worse and worse. Observe his loftiness, his arrogancy, his pride, his haughtiness; the multiplying of words to the same purport intimates in how many instances he discovered his pride, and how offensive it was both to God and man. It was charged upon them (*Isa. 16:6*), but here it is expressed more largely than there. Since then they had been under humbling providences, and yet were unhumiliated; nay, they grew more arrogant and haughty, which plainly marked them for that utter destruction of which pride is the forerunner. *H.*

Pride. With accumulated phrases emphasis is laid upon this leading sin of Moab, a sin which is condemned throughout Scripture as one of great wickedness. Pride is a passion rising out of an inordinate opinion of our own worthiness. It is to be distinguished from vanity. Vanity is eager for the admiration of others, though, perhaps, in its own heart conscious of possessing but little to deserve it. But pride is inwardly elated with the feeling of self-importance, and may be quite indifferent to the opinion of the world. Indeed, the height of pride is to scorn the admiration as much as the hatred of other men. It is possible, however, for a man to have a very high opinion of his own powers, importance, etc., without much pride. For pride is not a mere conviction of the great worth of one's self, it is an emotion, a passion, a disposition to dwell on one's own merits and make idols of them. Why is this so strongly condemned in Scripture? so hateful to God? Pride is the denial of guilt, the assumption that the good we re-

ceive from God is deserved ; it is, therefore, a gross presumption, an evidence of base ingratitude, a proof of self-will that refuses to humble itself before the good and holy Father. *Adency.*

There never was a saint yet that grew proud of his fine feathers but what the Lord plucked them out by and by ; there never yet was an angel that had pride in his heart but he lost his wings, and fell into Gehenna, as Satan and those fallen angels did ; and there shall never be a saint who indulges self-conceit and pride and self-confidence but the Lord will spoil his glories, and trample his honors in the mire, and make him cry out yet again, " Lord, have mercy upon me ! " less than the least of all saints, and the " very chief of sinners." The first Adam was for self-exaltation, and to be as gods ; the second bids us to be as He was, " meek and lowly in heart." *Anon.*

Suggestions for its cure. How entirely all our gifts are gifts ! Much as we may think of ourselves on account of them, we are excelled by very many. If we have many gifts, that does but mean much and solemn responsibility. How ill it would fare with us were we to be called now to account for the use we have made of our gifts in the past ! How but for the mercy of God in Christ, the most gifted is but a poor, lost sinner, cast out from the presence of God forever ! C.

35. Idolatry had blighted her morals, debased her character and insulted the living God ; why should not His judgments smite those who " brought offerings to her high places and burned incense to her gods ? " H. C.

36. The abundance he hath gotten is perished. Earthly treasure can only enable its possessor to surround himself with superfluous pomp, to " walk in a vain show ; " it can only gratify the taste and imagination or catch the applause of the multitude ; it has no power to come into contact with the soul ; none to calm the perturbations of conscience, heal the corrosions of remorse or give comfort to the dying-bed ; wealth cannot meet the requisitions of the heart, it cannot impart purity to the affections ; it can shed no mental grace or joy, nor let in the light of hope upon eternity ; it leaves the mind as exposed as ever to all the terrors of judgment and the wrath of God ! But heavenly riches illuminate the understanding, pacify the conscience, and fill the heart with unutterable joy. " The good man is satisfied from himself ; " he is admitted to the communion of saints and angels ; he dwells in love, he dwells in God, and God in him !

The wealth of this world can never, by its na-

ture, become truly our own. We may identify ourselves with it, and seem as if we were enlarged by our possession ; but this is merely a fiction of the imagination ; we must at least shrink back into our proper selves, and feel that our possessions are utterly separate from our souls. Whatever our circumstances, we are left unaltered in our moral state, our spiritual reality. But the riches of eternity are part of ourselves. *R. Hall.*

36-39. Here are clustered the prominent oriental tokens of a great public mourning. The prophet sympathizes, as is shown by his heart sounding or moaning like pipes. The central fact from which this expression comes is, that extreme grief violently convulses the bodily organs. Then the hair is torn out or shorn off ; the flesh gashed ; the coarsest cloth girded about the loins. People ascend the housetops to retire from public view, as the Orientals went there for secret prayer (Acts 10 : 9). They howl and wail, giving expression in this plaintive way to their grief. H. C.

38. *The broken vessel was not broken by accident.* A vessel broken by accident would not have furnished the proper figure. Lives that are as real serviceable vessels in the hand of God never do get broken by accident. Earthen vessels though they often be, there is a providence and a watchfulness which preserves them till their work is done. They are kept through days of persecution ; they are restored from sickness ; they live on into a good old age, while men apparently stronger and of greater physical resource are stricken down. And when there seems sometimes a premature and unaccountable breaking, yet it is really to be regarded in another light, namely, as a change to higher and fuller service. Only service gives value to a human life. Y.

40-42. This destroyer, "*He* who should come like an eagle," was primarily the king of the Chaldeans. Moab fell before the same power which desolated Judah and Jerusalem. Here we meet again, as in verse 26, with the vital truth that Moab ceased from being a nation because she had magnified herself against the living God. If all the historians who record the ultimate extinction of nations were inspired of God to give the true reasons of their fall, we should often meet this testimony, "*Perished of national pride, producing contempt of God and of fundamental morality.*" H. C.

43, 44. The frequent prosperity of the wicked is indeed a fact not at all concealed or qualified in the Scriptures. A man of the world takes his own worldly way to keep peril at a

distance, and he seems to fall into no pit, no snare. Let all this be allowed. Nothing is gained by trying to make out that the wicked have no advantages. It was an old-world legend that some men sold themselves to the devil, and that his protection secured to them their wonderful immunities and prosperity. But all that is gained is in the way of postponement. Wicked men travel in a narrowing path, and at last are shut up to face the judgments of God. Y.

47. *Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab.* The Moabites were afterward restored to their country, as appears from Josephus. *W. Lowth.*—But these and such like promises of mercy after judgment are chiefly to be understood of the conversion of the Gentiles under the Gospel, called the latter days in the prophets. (Cf. chap. 15 : 15, 16, 17 ; 49 : 6,

39 ; Isa. 18 : 7 ; 19 : 18, etc. ; 23 : 18.) The conversion of idolaters is expressed by *returning their captivity* (Ezek. 16 : 53). *W. Lowth.*

In the dearth of precise historic records, it is not easy to accommodate to each other these apparently conflicting statements ; on the one hand, that “ Moab shall be destroyed from being a people ” (verse 42) and, on the other, that “ God will bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days ” (verse 47). The fact seems to be that under the Chaldean arms, shortly after Jeremiah wrote, Moab suffered severely, yet that she rallied again, and was prosperous and powerful in the age of Josephus and subsequently. But its nationality has long since utterly ceased. The same promise of bringing again the captives is made to Egypt (chap. 46 : 26) ; to the Ammonites (chap. 49 : 6), and to the Elamites (chap. 49 : 39). H. C.

JEREMIAH. CHAPTER XLIX.

49 : 1 OF the children of Ammon. Thus saith the LORD : Hath Israel no sons ? hath he no heir ? why then doth Malcam possess Gad, and his people dwell in the cities thereof ? Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard against Rabbah of the children of Ammon ; and it shall become a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire : then shall Israel possess them that did possess him, saith the LORD. Howl, O Heshbon, for Ai is spoiled ; cry, ye daughters of Rabbah, gird you with sackcloth : lament, and run to and fro among the fences ; for Malcam shall go into captivity, his priests and his princes together. Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, thy flowing valley, O backsliding daughter ? that trusted in her treasures, *saying*, Who shall come unto me ? Behold, I will bring a fear upon thee, saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, from all that are round about thee ; and ye shall be driven out every man right forth, and there shall be none to gather up him that wandereth. But afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the LORD.

7 OF Edom. Thus saith the LORD of hosts : Is wisdom no more in Teman ? is counsel perished from the prudent ? is their wisdom vanished ? Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan ; for I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time that I shall visit him. If grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes ? If thieves by night, would they not destroy till they had enough ? But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself : his seed is spoiled, and his brethren and his neighbours, and he is not. Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive ; and let thy widows trust in me. For thus saith the LORD : Behold, they to whom it pertained not to drink of the cup shall assuredly drink ; and art thou he that shall altogether go unpunished ? thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink. For I have sworn by myself, saith the LORD, that Bozrah shall become an astonishment, a reproach, a waste, and a curse ; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes. I have heard tidings from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the nations, *saying*, Gather yourselves together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle. For, behold, I have

16 made thee small among the nations, and despised among men. As for thy terribleness, the pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill : though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD. And Edom shall become an astonishment : every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD, no man shall dwell there, neither shall any son of man sojourn therein. Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the pride of Jordan against the strong habitation : but I will suddenly make him run away from her ; and whoso is chosen, him will I appoint over her : for who is like me ? and who will appoint me a time ? and who is the shepherd that will stand before me ? Therefore hear ye the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Edom ; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman : Surely they shall drag them away, *even* the little ones of the flock ; surely he shall make their habitation desolate with them. The earth trembleth at the noise of their fall ; there is a cry, the noise whereof is heard in the Red Sea. Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread out his wings against Bozrah : and the heart of the mighty men of Edom at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

23 Of Damascus. Hamath is ashamed, and Arpad ; for they have heard evil tidings, they are melted away : there is sorrow on the sea ; it cannot be quiet. Damascus is waxed feeble, she turneth herself to flee, and trembling hath seized on her : anguish and sorrows have taken hold of her, as of a woman in travail. How is the city of praise not forsaken, the city of my joy ? Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets, and all the men of war shall be brought to silence in that day, saith the LORD of hosts. And I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad.

23 Of Kedar, and of the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote. 29 Thus saith the LORD : Arise ye, go up to Kedar, and spoil the children of the east. Their tents and their flocks shall they take ; they shall carry away for themselves their curtains, and all their vessels, and their camels : and they shall cry unto them, Terror on every side. 30 Flee ye, wander far off, dwell deep, O ye inhabitants of Hazor, saith the LORD ; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath taken counsel against you, and hath conceived a purpose against you. Arise, get you up unto a nation that is at ease, that dwelleth without care, 32 saith the LORD ; which have neither gates nor bars, which dwell alone. And their camels shall be a booty, and the multitude of their cattle a spoil : and I will scatter unto all winds them that have the corners of their hair polled ; and I will bring their calamity from every side of them, saith the LORD. And Hazor shall be a dwelling place of jackals, a desolation for ever : no man shall dwell there, neither shall any son of man sojourn therein.

34 The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning Elam in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts : Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might. And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds ; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come. And I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies, and before them that seek their life : and I will bring evil upon them, even my fierce anger, saith the LORD ; and I will send the sword after them, till I have consumed them : and I will set my throne in Elam, and will destroy from thence king and princes, saith the LORD. But it shall come to pass in the latter days, that I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the LORD.

Chap. 49. This chapter comprises five distinct prophecies—viz., of Ammon (verses 1-6) ; of Edom (verses 7-22) ; of Damascus (verses 23-27) ; of Kedar and Hazor (verses 28-33) ; and of Elam (verses 34-39). II. C.

1-6. The Ammonites were next, both in kindred and neighborhood, to the Moabites, and therefore are next set to the bar. Their country joined to that of the two tribes and a half, on the other side Jordan, and was but a bad

neighbor; however, being a neighbor, they shall have a share in these circular predictions. H.

1. Ammon, like Moab, descended from Lot. His country lay north of Moab and east of that assigned to the two and a half tribes on the east of Jordan. Hence his people not unnaturally came from time to time into hostile attitude toward Israel. Malcom, rendered here "their king," is rather the proper name of their national god. Hence this first verse implies that Ammon had taken possession of the territory of Gad. Is it because Israel has no sons to inherit after him, that the god of Ammon inherits the land of Gad, and his people dwell in the cities of Gad? These two and a half tribes had probably been largely borne away into captivity by the Assyrian armies at the fall of the northern kingdom. God rebukes Ammon for too greedily seizing upon their territory.

3. Here also "Malcom" should have been transferred as the proper name of their god, and not translated as if a common noun. His name appears in the slightly different form of Milcom in 1 K. 11:5, 33, and 2 K. 23:13, as the tutelary god of Ammon. This god would have his own priests and his princes. The former could not be said of "their king." He would not have his priests. H. C.

7-22. The Edomites come next to receive their doom from God, by the mouth of Jeremiah; they also were old enemies to the Israel of God; but their day will come to be reckoned with, and it is now at hand, and is foretold, not only for warning to them, but for comfort to the Israel of God, whose afflictions were very much aggravated by their triumphs over them, and joy in their calamity (Ps. 137:7). Many of the expressions used in this prophecy concerning Edom are borrowed from the prophecy of Obadiah, which is concerning Edom; for all the prophets being inspired by one and the same Spirit, there must needs be a wonderful harmony and agreement in their predictions. H.

This prophecy concerning Edom should be studied in connection with Obadiah, and with Ezek. 25:12-14 and Lam. 4:21, 22. In all these passages it is intimated that Edom is punished for his envy and cruelty toward his brethren, the posterity of Jacob. Obadiah names "his violence against his brother Jacob," his "looking on his brother in his calamity," etc. Ezekiel says, "Because Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended and revenged himself upon them," etc. Hence the

judgment here predicted against Edom comes in the way of moral retribution. Several expressions found here occur also in Obadiah. "Teman" was the name of the country adjacent to Edom, and probably in its alliance. Its people had been celebrated for their wisdom. The apocryphal book of Baruch (chap. 3:22, 23) bears testimony to this general reputation. H. C.

7. *The failure of wisdom.* Edom, the country of Job, the haunt of ancient lore, is to find that her learning and science will prove no safeguard against the deluge of destruction that is about to burst over the nations. The disaster which fell upon ancient "wise men" of the East may be a warning to the higher intelligences of all ages. *Adeney.*

Edom, celebrated for its wisdom from of old (Obad. 8; Job 11:11), had secured itself in inaccessible fastnesses of the mountains, dwelling in rock-hewn cities. It was chiefly in international relations that the skill or subtlety of the Idumæans displayed itself. Their diplomacy was full of craft and falsehood, and could not be relied upon. Their wisdom was essentially of this world—cold, calculating and unscrupulous. Of this it is predicted by Jeremiah that it shall be brought to naught. M.

8. "Dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan." The prophet is foretelling the calamities that are to come on the different heathen nations who dwelt around the land of God's people, and from whom they, at various times, had received sore wrong and harm. The Edomites—the descendants of Esau—were the traditional foes of Israel, and it is they who in all probability are referred to. The country they inhabited was full of rocks, cliffs, deep gorges in the sides of which were many all but inaccessible caves. The rocky dwellings of Edom have been often told of—how they served as an almost impenetrable fortress for the robber bands which mostly inhabited them. But now vengeance was to come on these people, and the prophet is bidding them betake themselves in flight to the far-off desert, or to hide themselves in the deep recesses of their rocky caves, and there, if possible, safely dwell. C.

16. The word rendered "*clefts of the rocks*" means the *refuges*, the recesses. The descriptive points in this verse are wonderfully accurate. Petra, the ancient capital of Edom, for ages the main thoroughfare of the great trade and travel between India and Mesopotamia on the east, and Egypt and North Africa on the southwest; the seat therefore of wealth and art, perhaps of wisdom also and of culture,

held a position of great military strength. It was built in a vast ravine, partly on the broad area enclosed by lofty precipitous walls of rock, which by some of nature's mighty convulsions had been rent asunder, and partly in those very fronts of lofty rock, chiselled out with immense labor, so that the pillars of its temples and the apartments of its tombs and dwellings were wholly cut from the solid eternal rock. Here—her nests built high in these crags like the eagle's—old Petra sat in her pride and her strength, cherishing the vain fancy that no power could ever bring her down. But the Almighty spake and it was done! The site of ancient Petra, for ages unknown, has been brought to light during the present century. A number of travellers have visited and explored it. Laborde, Dr. Robinson, and others have given full and precise statements of its wonderful ruins, placing Petra in the front rank of those ancient witnesses who bear their silent but resistless testimony to the precision of the old prophetic descriptions and to the marvellous correspondence in the most minute details between prophecy and history—the prophecy of twenty centuries ago and the history of to-day. H. C.

Such cities as the rock-hewn Petra, and Bozrah seated on her lofty hill, would seem by natural position impregnable. Consequently their inhabitants would grow insolent and proud, and thus deserve the more that fate which their natural resources could not avert, and their self-confidence would prevent them from mitigating. Worldly resources are dangers when they lead us to forsake the true Refuge in order to trust in them. The rich and great are not the more secure for their privileges, and they will be the less safe if they lean upon them when without them they would seek help in God. *Adeney.*

17, 18. Every word of this fearful description is fulfilled. The ancient site of Sodom and Gomorrah is scarcely more void of inhabitants this day than the site of ancient Petra. Some of her dwellings hewn from the solid rock remain, but no human beings dwell therein. They echo only to the cry of the owl and the scream of the vulture. (Isa. 34: 11-15.) H. C.

18. *As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah.* A proverbial expression, denoting an utter desolation. (See chap. 50: 40; Isa. 13: 19.) *W. Lowth.*—We know little more of the history of the Edomites than as it is connected with that of the Jews; and where is the name or the nation now? They were swallowed up

and lost, partly among the Nabathean Arabs, and partly among the Jews; and the very name was abolished and disused about the first century after Christ. Thus were they rewarded for insulting and oppressing their brethren the Jews, and hereby were fulfilled the prophecies of Jeremiah in this chapter; and of the other prophets enumerated in the note under verses 7-22. *Bp. Newton.*

19. *Behold, he shall come up like a lion,* etc. A description of Nebuchadnezzar, marching with his army against Idumea. *W. Lowth.*—Upon occasion of the inundations to which the Jordan is subject, we are told by Maundrell that several sorts of wild beasts which are wont to harbor among the trees and bushes by the river-side are forced out of their covert, and infest the neighboring plains. To this circumstance the prophet here alludes. *Blayney.*

What leader or general can enter the lists with Me? The word "shepherd" often signifies a prince or commander. (See chap. 6: 3; 25: 34.) But here it is used in opposition to the "lion," mentioned before; as if he had said, A shepherd may as well encounter a lion, as the best-appointed warrior contend with God Almighty, or those whom He makes the instruments of His vengeance.

21. *The earth is moved at the noise.* The surrounding countries are astonished at its ruin, and the sound of it reaches even to the Red Sea, which was at a considerable distance from the land of Edom. The prophet compares the destruction of a nation to the fall of a great building. (See Ezek. 26: 15; 31: 16.) *W. Lowth.*

23-27. The kingdom of Syria lay north of Canaan, as that of Edom lay south, and thither we must now remove, and take a view of the approaching fate of that kingdom, which had been often vexatious to the Israel of God. Damascus was the metropolis of that kingdom, and the ruin of the whole is supposed in the ruin of that; yet Hamath and Arpad, two other considerable cities, are named (verse 23), and the palaces of Ben-hadad, which he built, are particularly marked for ruin (verse 27); see also Amos 1: 4. Ben-hadad (the son of Hadad, either their idol or one of their ancient kings, whence the rest descended) was a common name of the kings of Syria, as Pharaoh of the kings of Egypt. H.

23. *Concerning Damascus.* Damascus was the capital of the kingdom of Syria, and had seemingly at this time swallowed up all the other petty sovereignties of that country. Isaiah had before uttered a prophecy concerning it of calamitous import (chap. 17), which

had been fulfilled by Tiglath-pileser's taking it and carrying away the people captives to Kir (2 K. 16 : 9). Amos also had foretold the same event (chap. 1 : 3-5). But it had recovered itself after the fall of the Assyrian empire, and is here doomed to suffer again the like calamities from the resentment of Nebuchadnezzar, probably about the same time with the other nations. *Blayney.*

23-27. Hamath and Arpad (otherwise called Arvad) were cities north of Palestine, probably the chief cities of independent sovereignties. They were at that time smitten with consternation, hearing that Damascus had fallen before an invading force. They apprehended that their turn must come next. Arpad was near the Mediterranean Sea. Hence perhaps the clause, "Sorrow on the sea;" or the reading may be, "Their agitation is like that of the sea," which cannot be quiet. Some good critics favor this reading and sense. Verse 25 may be understood as the language of any one of the inhabitants of Damascus: "How is the city of my pride" (which I have praised) "and of my joy abandoned of all good!" What good has not forsaken it! What calamity has not befallen it! "Therefore" (verse 26) does not indicate here a logical inference from what precedes, but should be read "*correspondingly*;" accordingly, her young men fall, etc. Along with the utter fall of the city came the slaughter of her warriors. Inasmuch as the prophecy against Kedar refers to Nebuchadnezzar as the destroyer, and as the same is said also of Egypt (chap. 46 : 26), it is highly probable that most if not all of these prophecies contemplate the same scourge and "hammer of the nations"—the more so from the manifest correspondence between these chaps. 46-49 and chap. 25 : 15-25. II. C.

23. "There is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet." We must remember that the sea to the Jew of old time was an object of almost unmixed terror. Nearly all the allusions in the Bible tell of its power and peril, never of its preciousness and value to man. The Jews were a non-seafaring people; they dreaded it. In De. 28 : 68 the being taken back to Egypt in ships is held out as a great threatening. They had no seaport worth mentioning. For centuries their seaboard was held by the Philistines. All their conceptions of it relate to its hurtful and destructive power. C.

28-33. These verses foretell the desolation that Nebuchadnezzar and his forces should make among the people of Kedar (who descended from Kedar, the son of Ishmael, and

inhabited a part of Arabia the Stony), and of the kingdoms, the petty principalities of Hazor, that joined to them who, perhaps, were originally Canaanites, of the kingdom of Hazor, in the north of Canaan, which had Jabin for its king, but being driven thence, settled in the deserts of Arabia, and associated themselves with the Kedarenes. II.

Kedar (the dark-skinned), a son of Ishmael, gave his name to an ancient Arab tribe distinguished for wealth and power. It long held possession of the northwest district of Arabia proper, and comes frequently to view in the Scriptures—*e.g.*, Isa. 21 : 13-17; 42 : 11; 60 : 7; Ezek. 27 : 21. Hazor, if a name for an Arab sovereignty, is less known. There was a strong city and sovereignty of that name in the north of Canaan when Joshua conquered the country, but that people were not known in that country in the time of Jeremiah. Probably this Hazor, so closely associated with Kedar, is also, an Arab tribe. The Lord commissioned Nebuchadnezzar to go and smite those children of the East. The description in verse 29 is of a nomadic race, whose wealth consisted in their tents and flocks, with a few simple utensils and also camels. The directions, "Flee, get you far off, dwell deep," were precisely adapted to their habits, describing the very things they do when attacked by a resistless foe—mount their camels, flee far off, plunge into the depths of their vast deserts, where no enemy not thus furnished with animals for the desert can follow them. In verse 31, "Arise, get you," etc., like the same words in verse 28, are addressed to the king of Babylon. These Arab sovereignties were dwelling carelessly, with no apprehensions of danger. Arabs never protect themselves with "gates and bars." Their camels and fleet horses are their only reliance for safety. Yet despite of this protection, usually ample, the Lord will bring on them a fearful desolation. The Hebrew phrase rendered "Those that are in the utmost corners," means men having the corners of their beards shorn—a designation of contempt often given to the Arabs of the desert. (See the same phrase, chaps. 9 : 25 and 25 : 23.)

34-39. This prophecy is dated in the beginning of Zedekiah's reign; it is probable that the other prophecies against the Gentiles going before were at the same time. The Elamites were the Persians, descended from Elam, the son of Shem (Gen. 10 : 22), yet some think it was only that part of Persia which lay nearest to the Jews, which was called Elymais, and adjoined to Media-Elam, which, say they, had

acted against God's Israel, bare the quiver in an expedition against them (Isa. 22:6), and therefore must be reckoned with among the rest. It is here foretold, in general, that God will bring evil upon them, even His fierce anger, and that is evil enough, it has all evil in it (verse 37). II.

Elam was an independent and even powerful kingdom in the days of Abram (Gen. 14:1). When the monarchy of Persia was established under Cyrus, Elam was blended into and formed a part of it; but before that time they were two distinct kingdoms. According to the present prophecy, Elam is spoken of as having actually become a province of the Babylonish empire (Dan. 8:2); and Daniel appears to have presided over it, having Shushan for the seat of his government. It therefore probably was, as the name would lead us to suppose, the country called by heathen writers Elymais, which Pliny and Strabo, in conformity with Daniel, describe as separated from Susiana by the river Eulæus, or Ulai. On the final subversion of the Babylonish monarchy, Elam was restored again, as is intimated below (verse 39), to its former possessors, who had fought under the banners of the Medes and Persians. (See Isa. 21:2.) *Blayney.*

Elam is sometimes confounded with Persia, and does in some cases represent Persia, but was anciently a distinct kingdom, in very ancient times one of great power, for Chedorlao-mer, king of Elam, seems to have headed the powerful allied army from the East in the first war of extant history (Gen. 14:1-12). Little is known of its subsequent history. In the Scriptures Elam appears (Gen. 10:22) as the son of Shem; in Gen. 14, as above, a powerful kingdom of the East; in Isa. 21:2 and 22:6, as associated with Media in the conquest of Babylon, where the name would seem to represent Persia as a whole. In Ezra 4:9, the

Elamites are among the nations who composed the vast Medo-Persian empire; in Ezek. 32:24 they are among the great uncircumcised nations who had been the terror of the world; in Jer. 25:25, with the Medes and many others, they are doomed to drink the wine-cup of Divine judgment; and in Dan. 8:2, they are a province, probably of the Persian empire. Hence it is generally supposed that Elam is identical with the Elymais of the Greek historians—a province having Media on the north, and the Persian gulf on the south, with Babylonia on the west, and Persia proper on the east, about half as large in territory as Persia. Very probably it was subjugated by Nebuchadnezzar and brought under the world-wide sway of Babylon in the height of its glory, yet it would seem to be associated with Media and Persia in the siege and conquest of Babylon by Cyrus. (See Isa. 21:2 and 22:6.) To that subjugation this prophecy (verses 35-38) may refer, and verse 39 to a subsequent independence. The precise date of this prophecy is given—unlike the usage in the other prophecies of this series—*e.g.*, against Egypt, the Philistines, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus and Kedar. *Why* the precise date is given here and not in those other cases does not certainly appear. Perhaps because this was nearer the time of its fulfilment, so that only by a precise date would the reader in future time have the means of knowing that the prophecy came before the events it predicted. The bow was a prominent weapon of war among all the ancient nations, pre eminently so with the Elamites, the chief source of their strength. To “break their bow” therefore would effectually crush their military power. Verse 36 indicates the widest and most diversified dispersion of her people. Our knowledge of ancient history is too imperfect to verify the accuracy of this prediction. H. C.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTER L.

50:1 THE word that the LORD spake concerning Babylon, concerning the land of the Chaldeans, by Jeremiah the prophet.

- 2 Declare ye among the nations and publish, and set up a standard ; publish, and conceal not : say, Babylon is taken, Bel is put to shame, Merodach is dismayed ; her images are put
3 to shame, her idols are dismayed. For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein : they are fled, they are
4 gone, both man and beast. In those days and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together ; they shall go on their way weep-
5 ing, and shall seek the LORD their God. They shall inquire concerning Zion with their faces thitherward, *saying*, Come ye, and join yourselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant that shall not be forgotten.
- 6 My people hath been lost sheep : their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains : they have gone from mountain to hill, they have
7 forgotten their resting place. All that found them have devoured them : and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the LORD, the
8 habitation of justice, even the LORD, the hope of their fathers. Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he-goats
9 before the flocks. For, lo, I will stir up and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country : and they shall set themselves in
10 array against her ; from thence she shall be taken : their arrows shall be as of an expert mighty man ; none shall return in vain. And Chaldea shall be a spoil : all that spoil her
11 shall be satisfied, saith the LORD. Because ye are glad, because ye rejoice, O ye that plunder mine heritage, because ye are wanton as an heifer that treadeth out *the corn*, and neigh as
12 strong horses ; your mother shall be sore ashamed ; she that bare you shall be confounded : behold, she shall be the hindermost of the nations, a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert.
13 Because of the wrath of the LORD it shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate :
14 every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues. Set yourselves in array against Babylon round about, all ye that bend the bow ; shoot at her, spare no
15 arrows : for she hath sinned against the LORD. Shout against her round about ; she hath submitted herself ; her bulwarks are fallen, her walls are thrown down : for it is the ven-
16 geance of the LORD ; take vengeance upon her ; as she hath done, do unto her. Cut off the sower from Babylon, and him that handleth the sickle in the time of harvest : for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people, and they shall flee every one to his own land.
- 17 Israel is a scattered sheep ; the lions have driven him away : first the king of Assyria hath devoured him ; and last this Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones.
18 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel : Behold, I will punish the king of
19 Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria. And I will bring Israel again to his pasture, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied upon
20 the hills of Ephraim and in Gilead. In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none ; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found : for I will pardon them whom I leave as a remnant.
- 21 Go up against the land of Merathaim, even against it, and against the inhabitants of Pekod : slay and utterly destroy after them, saith the LORD, and do according to all that I
22, 23 have commanded thee. A sound of battle is in the land, and of great destruction. How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken ! how is Babylon become a desola-
24 tion among the nations ! I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken. O Babylon, and thou wast not aware : thou art found, and also caught, because thou hast striven against the
25 LORD. The LORD hath opened his armoury, and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation : for the LORD, the LORD of hosts, hath a work *to do* in the land of the Chaldeans.
26 Come against her from the utmost border, open her storehouses : cast her up as heaps, and

27 destroy her utterly : let nothing of her be left. Slay all her bullocks ; let them go down to
 28 the slaughter : woe unto them ! for their day is come, the time of their visitation. The voice
 of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of
 29 the LORD our God, the vengeance of his temple. Call together the archers against Babylon,
 all them that bend the bow ; camp against her round about ; let none thereof escape : recom-
 pense her according to her work ; according to all that she hath done, do unto her : for she
 30 hath been proud against the LORD, against the Holy One of Israel. Therefore shall her
 young men fall in her streets, and all her men of war shall be brought to silence in that day,
 31 saith the LORD. Behold, I am against thee, O thou proud one, saith the LORD, the LORD of
 32 hosts : for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee. And the proud one shall stumble
 and fall, and none shall raise him up : and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour
 all that are round about him.

33 Thus saith the LORD of hosts : The children of Israel and the children of Judah are
 oppressed together : and all that took them captives hold them fast ; they refuse to let them
 34 go. Their redeemer is strong ; the LORD of hosts is his name : he shall thoroughly plead
 35 their cause, that he may give rest to the earth, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon. A
 sword is upon the Chaldeans, saith the LORD, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon
 36 her princes, and upon her wise men. A sword is upon the boasters, and they shall dote : a
 37 sword is upon her mighty men, and they shall be dismayed. A sword is upon their horses,
 and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her, and
 38 they shall become as women : a sword is upon her treasures, and they shall be robbed. A
 drought is upon her waters, and they shall be dried up : for it is a land of graven images,
 39 and they are mad upon idols. Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wolves shall
 dwell there, and the ostriches shall dwell therein : and it shall be no more inhabited for ever ;
 40 neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. As when God overthrew Sodom and
 Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD ; so shall no man dwell there, neither
 41 shall any son of man sojourn therein. Behold, a people cometh from the north ; and a great
 42 nation, and many kings shall be stirred up from the uttermost parts of the earth. They lay
 hold on bow and spear ; they are cruel, and have no mercy ; their voice roareth like the sea,
 and they ride upon horses ; every one set in array, as a man to the battle, against thee, O
 43 daughter of Babylon. The king of Babylon hath heard the fame of them, and his hands wax
 44 feeble : anguish hath taken hold of him, and pangs as of a woman in travail. Behold, he
 shall come up like a lion from the pride of Jordan against the strong habitation : but I will
 suddenly make them run away from her ; and whoso is chosen, him will I appoint over her :
 for who is like me ? and who will appoint me a time ? and who is the shepherd that will
 45 stand before me ? Therefore hear ye the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against
 Babylon ; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the land of the Chaldeans : Surely
 they shall drag them away, *even* the little ones of the flock ; surely he shall make their habi-
 46 tation desolate with them. At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth trembleth, and
 the cry is heard among the nations.

Chap. 50. This chapter and the next contain a prophecy concerning the fall of Babylon, intermixed and contrasted with predictions concerning the redemption of Israel and Judah, who were not, like those oppressors, to be finally extirpated, but to survive them, and, upon their repentance and conversion, to be pardoned and restored. The prophecy was delivered and sent to Babylon in the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign, as appears from chap. 51 : 59. *Blayney.*

As the catalogue of nations doomed to drink the Lord's wine-cup of judgment (Jer. 25 : 15-33) enumerates substantially all the tribes and sovereignties of Western Asia and Egypt first,

and Babylon after them, so this series of more expanded prophecies (chaps. 46-51) gives the most prominent of those nations first, and closes with Babylon. This series of prophecies is manifestly an expansion of that summary statement. The German critics force upon us the question of the authorship of these prophecies against Babylon (chaps. 50 and 51). . . . When the fact of Divine inspiration is accepted according to the constant and consistent tenor of these writings, and according to all the evidence that bears upon the case, and when moreover due regard is had to the special object of these chapters and the standpoint of view from which they were written, all critical

difficulties vanish. Everything is as we should legitimately expect. All is rational and pertinent.

1-3: Remarkably, *before* Chaldea became a first-class power—*before* Babylon became the wonder of the world and the first city of her age—this humble prophet of Anathoth announces to the nations of the earth that she is doomed ere long to fall! Her proud city is to be captured; her idols are to be confounded and utterly broken to pieces. This is real prophecy! Such are its lofty prerogatives—indeinitely high above the utmost reach of human sagacity! Bel and Merodach are only different names for the same god—the patron god of great Babylon—the same whom Nebuchadnezzar, both in the sacred Scriptures and in profane records, continually recognizes and adores as his own god. (See Dan. 4:8; 3:14.) These heathen gods were accounted the patrons and protectors of their worshippers. Hence the fall of Babylon would be the confounding and breaking down of their god. In their view, Babylon could not fall until its god had been overpowered. This conquering power before which Babylon falls comes from the north. When the prophet wrote, this power also, even more than that of Babylon, was undeveloped. No eye save that of God could see its future greatness.

4, 5. Thus early in the course of this magnificent prophecy appears this clear intimation that, coincident with the fall of Babylon, the Lord's people would earnestly seek their God, asking the way to Zion with their faces set to go thither, and most fitly proposing to join themselves to the Lord in a covenant sacred and perpetual, and never, like their former covenant, to be broken and forgotten. Dan. 9 is an interesting comment on this prophecy. We may suppose that Daniel was not alone in his spirit of humble confession and earnest supplication for Divine mercy. There were others with him who set their faces fully toward the Zion of their fathers. The author of Ps. 137 is personally unknown to us, but plainly he expressed the feelings not of one man alone, but of many of the waiting and hoping captives alongside the rivers of Babylon. The spirit of that psalm would readily culminate into the prompt and earnest passion for seeking God and His Zion which stands out in this prophecy with such life-like boldness and beauty. H. C.

The value of such vows and covenants is that they render going back from God more difficult. They help to steady the will and

confirm the wavering purpose. They commit us to the right side. It is a kind of breaking down the bridges behind us, a burning of the boats, so that the soldiers started on the enterprise may not be able to recross the river. Hence we urge such open and solemn avowal, consecration and covenanting with God. It tends to make your adhesion to God "perpetual," and your holy purpose to serve Him far less likely to "be forgotten." Thus was it with Israel and Judah—never since have they fallen into idolatry, and though yet "the veil is before their faces," they are far other than what they were. And in our own churches such consecration has again and again been greatly blessed. C.

7. They plead in justification, "We have done no crime, for these people have sinned against their own Lord, the hope of their fathers, the God who is the *home* (habitation) of justice, and who, therefore, demands justice in His people, and visits on the guilty a righteous retribution." These points made in this seventh verse are indeed very remarkable. They are admirably adapted to make a profound impression upon the exiles in respect to the *cause* of their national calamities and the views of their case which might well be taken by at least the more intelligent among their captors. H. C.

9. The commission and charge given to the instruments that were to be employed in destroying Babylon. The army that is to do it is called an assembly of great nations (verse 9), the Medes and Persians and all their allies and auxiliaries; it is called an assembly, because regularly formed by the Divine will and counsel to do this execution. God will raise them up to do it, will incline them to and fit them for this service, and then He will cause them to come up, for all their motions are under His conduct and direction; He shall give the word of command, shall order them to put themselves in array against Babylon (verse 14), and then they shall put themselves in array (verse 9) for what God appoints to be done shall be done; and from thence she shall be quickly taken; from their first sitting down before it they shall be still gaining ground against it till it be taken. H.

11-13. Throughout this prophecy the idea of retributive justice is made prominent. Because Babylon exulted proudly in her conquest of Judah, and because she forgot the Lord Almighty, and waxed fat and haughty against Him (*e.g.*, Belshazzar in his wine-cups and revelry—Dan. 5:1-4), therefore the Lord will

bring on her this utter and fearful desolation. In verse 12 "your mother" refers to Babylon, the mother city of the nation. Even she should lose all her prestige and glory, and be utterly put to shame. The great Chaldean power, once first among nations, shall become the last ("hindermost") and lowest of them all. H. C.

13. "Babylon shall be an astonishment" was the voice of prophecy; and Babylon has become an astonishment, is the voice of all those who have stood among its desolations and remembered its history. The majestic stream of the Euphrates wanders in silent solitude, like an aged pilgrim, through its lonely ruins. Upon its banks are the river-weeds, and the gray willows on which the captives of Israel hung their harps, and refused to be comforted while their beloved Jerusalem was not. These remain; but not one thing which the prophets declared should be destroyed, from outer wall to inner court, can now be seen in that ancient and mighty metropolis of the world. From its palaces, its arches and its terraces, broken and fallen; from this throne of the kingdom sitting in the dust; from its active life, the thronging of its busy feet, now clad in silence and buried in the grave—do we not seem to hear ascending in solemn grandeur the response, "The Lord God Almighty hath spoken it"? *L. T. Townsend.*

17-19. The conception of Israel as scattered and lost sheep, driven and devoured by lions, appears here again (see verses 6-8) for the sake of connecting with it the retribution due and about to fall on her destroyers. The king of Assyria first took the Ten Tribes into captivity (B.C. 722) in the reign of Hoshea, king of Israel, and of Hezekiah, of Judah. (See 2 K. 17.) Now Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon ends the ruin by crushing and cranching his bones. The Lord had already punished Assyria by the utter ruin of Nineveh (B.C. 625). He here declares that He will in like manner punish Babylon. He did so by using Cyrus at the head of the Medo-Persian armies. H. C.

20. God will pardon their iniquity; this is the root of all the rest (verse 20). In those days the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none. Not only the punishments of their iniquity shall be taken off, but the offence which it gave to God shall be forgotten, and He will be reconciled to them. Their sin shall be before Him as if it had never been, it shall be blotted out as a cloud, crossed out as a debt, shall be cast behind His back; nay, it shall be cast into the depth of the sea, shall be no longer sealed up among God's treas-

ures, nor in any danger of appearing again or rising up against them. This denotes how fully God forgives sin; He remembers it no more. H.

Those whom He had spared to survive and remain He would fully and freely pardon. Thus pardoned, their sins would not appear before the face of God as demanding punishment. And as justice would no longer demand *their* punishment, it would demand the punishment of their oppressors. When the Lord's people become penitent and are forgiven, the moral reason for punishing them ceases; but all the greater is the reason for punishing their oppressors. The former are now the Lord's accepted flock, taken under His special protection. Will He not therefore visit retribution upon those that devour them? The subsequent context pursues this train of thought. H. C.

Divine forgiveness an absolute oblivion. The attribute of completeness characterizes God's work of *destruction* (verses 14-16); equally does it pertain to His work of *salvation* (verses 19, 20). In both is manifested His righteousness in its elements of wrath and mercy. His forgiveness acts in perfect harmony with His severity. M.

When God forgives a man He pardons him completely, as Christ thoroughly cured all the sick persons whom He healed in any way. There is no middle course here. Either the forgiveness is total or it is not accorded at all. This is *more than the remission of penalties*. Some consequences of sin must still remain, though these are no longer indications of God's anger, but converted into merciful chastisements. But the essence of forgiveness lies deeper than any manipulation of external experience. It is inward, in the relation of God to the soul. This spiritual forgiveness consists in the *removal of all estrangement* between God and the sinner. It is perfect reconciliation with no shadow cast upon it by old offences. *Adeney.*

29-32. This description, "archers" and "bowmen," applies well to the Medes and Persians. The Lord takes special pains to show that this curse on Babylon is for her pride and for her oppressive cruelty. All the nations of the world through all time ought to know and to heed this.

33, 34. "Redeemer" is here used in its original, legitimate sense—one who rescues from bondage; who buys off or recovers by force the enslaved and oppressed. In this sense the Lord of Hosts proves Himself the Redeemer of

His captive people. His interposition would give rest to His own land and to His people, restored and dwelling there, while it would equally give disquiet to the people of Babylon. H. C.

34. This is their comfort in distress, that though they are weak their Redeemer is strong (verse 34—their Avenger, so the word signifies); He that has a right to them and will claim His right, and make good His claim; He is stronger than their enemies that hold them fast; He can overpower all the force that is against them, and put strength into His own people though they are very weak. The Lord of Hosts is His name, and He will answer to His name, and make it to appear that He is what His people call Him, and will be that to them for which they depend upon Him. It is the unspeakable comfort of the people of God that though they have hosts against them, they have the Lord of Hosts for them; and He shall thoroughly plead their cause; pleading He shall plead it, plead it with jealousy, plead it effectually, plead it and carry it, that He may give rest to the land, to His people's land, rest from all their enemies round about. This is applicable to all believers who complain of the dominion of sin and corruption and of their own weakness and manifold infirmities; let them know that their Redeemer is strong, He is able to keep what they commit to Him, and He will plead their cause, sin shall not have dominion over them; He will make them free, and they shall be free indeed; He will give them rest, that rest which remains for the people of God. H.

The almightiness of God is our assurance of redemption. The massive strength of the rock makes it painful for us to fall upon it, and fearful and fatal for it to fall upon us; but this very characteristic renders it a blessing if we rest under its shadow, build on its foundation, or cling to it for support in the driving tempest. Men may well shrink from the might of God when they are opposed to it, and tremble and despair when it rises up, awful and irresistible, to crush them; but if they can turn to it with trust and know it is working their good, they will find in it a ground for solid assurance. How disastrous would it be for us to have a weak God, though He might have all other Divine perfections! His love might be infinite; but if He could only pity, and not effectually save us, His grace would be of little use. But our Redeemer is the Lord of hosts. If a host encamp against us, the Lord of Hosts is on our side. *Adeney.*

40. A desolation like that of Sodom and Gomorrah is the extreme of ruin, beyond which all figures and comparisons fail us.

43. The account of Belshazzar (Dan. 5) and the records of profane history conspire to fulfil every word of this prophecy. Belshazzar was in dismay and anguish; his night of revelry became his night of doom.

46. The fall of Babylon shook the whole earth; the cry of it went forth among all the nations. No nation could be unaffected by this event. She was the great central power in the whole eastern world. Hence, the shock of her fall was felt in every land like the shock of an earthquake. H. C.

JEREMIAH, CHAPTER LI.

51:1 **1** THUS saith the LORD: Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them 2 that dwell in Leb-kamai, a destroying wind. And I will send unto Babylon strangers, that shall fan her; and they shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against 3 her round about. Let not the archer bend his bow, and let him not lift himself up in his 4 coat of mail: and spare ye not her young men; destroy ye utterly all her host. And they 5 shall fall down slain in the land of the Chaldeans, and thrust through in her streets. For Israel is not forsaken, nor Judah, of his God, of the LORD of hosts; though their land is full 6 of guilt against the Holy One of Israel. Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and save every man his life; be not cut off in her iniquity: for it is the time of the LORD's vengeance; he 7 will render unto her a recompence. Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the

8 nations are mad. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed : howl for her ; take balm for
9 her pain, if so be she may be healed. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed :
forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country : for her judgement reacheth unto
10 heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies. The LORD hath brought forth our righteousness :
11 come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God. Make sharp the arrows ;
hold firm the shields : the LORD hath stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes ; because
his device is against Babylon, to destroy it : for it is the vengeance of the LORD, the ven-
12 geance of his temple. Set up a standard against the walls of Babylon, make the watch
strong, set the watchmen, prepare the ambushes : for the LORD hath both devised and done
13 that which he spake concerning the inhabitants of Babylon. O thou that dwellest upon
many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, the measure of thy covetousness.
14 The LORD of hosts hath sworn by himself, *saying*, Surely I will fill thee with men, as with
the cankerworm ; and they shall lift up a shout against thee.
15 He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and by
16 his understanding hath he stretched out the heavens : when he uttereth his voice, there is a
tumult of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the
earth ; he maketh lightnings for the rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.
17 Every man is become brutish *and is* without knowledge ; every goldsmith is put to shame
by his graven image : for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.
18 They are vanity, a work of delusion : in the time of their visitation they shall perish.
19 The portion of Jacob is not like these ; for he is the former of all things ; and *Israel* is the
tribe of his inheritance : the LORD of hosts is his name.
20 Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war : and with thee will I break in pieces the
21 nations ; and with thee will I destroy kingdoms ; and with thee will I break in pieces the
22 horse and his rider ; and with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and him that rideth therein ;
and with thee will I break in pieces man and woman ; and with thee will I break in pieces
the old man and the youth ; and with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the
23 maid ; and with thee will I break in pieces the shepherd and his flock ; and with thee will I
break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke *of oxen* ; and with thee will I break in pieces
24 governors and deputies. And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chal-
dea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD.
25 Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the
earth : and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and
26 will make thee a burnt mountain. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a
27 stone for foundations ; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the LORD. Set ye up a
standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her,
call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz : appoint a marshal
28 against her ; cause the horses to come up as the rough cankerworm. Prepare against her the
nations, the kings of the Medes, the governors thereof, and all the deputies thereof, and all
29 the land of his dominion. And the land trembleth and is in pain : for the purposes of the
LORD against Babylon do stand, to make the land of Babylon a desolation, without inhabit-
30 ant. The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, they remain in their strong holds ;
their might hath failed ; they are become as women : her dwelling places are set on fire ; her
31 bars are broken. One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to
32 shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken on every quarter : and the passages are sur-
prised, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted.
33 For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel : The daughter of Babylon is like a
threshing-floor at the time when it is trodden ; yet a little while, and the time of harvest shall
34 come for her. Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me,
he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his
35 maw with my delicates ; he hath cast me out. The violence done to me and to my flesh be
upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say ; and, My blood be upon the inhabitants of
36 Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say. Therefore thus saith the LORD : Behold, I will plead thy cause,
37 and take vengeance for thee ; and I will dry up her sea, and make her fountain dry. And
Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling place for jackals, an astonishment, and an hissing,
38 without inhabitant. They shall roar together like young lions ; they shall growl as lions'
39 whelps. When they are heated, I will make their feast, and I will make them drunken, that

40 they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the LORD. I will bring
 41 them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with he-goats. How is Sheshach taken !
 and the praise of the whole earth surprised ! how is Babylon become a desolation among the
 42 nations ! The sea is come up upon Babylon : she is covered with the multitude of the waves
 43 thereof. Her cities are become a desolation, a dry land, and a desert, a land wherein no man
 44 dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby. And I will do judgement upon Bel in
 Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up ; and the
 nations shall not flow together any more unto him : yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall.
 45 My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and save yourselves every man from the fierce
 46 anger of the LORD. And let not your heart faint, neither fear ye for the rumour that shall
 be heard in the land ; for a rumour shall come one year, and after that in another year *shall*
 47 *come* a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler. Therefore, behold, the days
 come, that I will do judgement upon the graven images of Babylon, and her whole land shall
 48 be ashamed ; and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her. Then the heaven and the earth,
 and all *that* is therein, shall sing for joy over Babylon ; for the spoilers shall come unto her
 49 from the north, saith the LORD. As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at
 50 Babylon shall fall the slain of all the land. Ye that have escaped the sword, go ye, stand not
 51 still ; remember the LORD from afar, and let Jerusalem come into your mind. We are
 ashamed, because we have heard reproach ; confusion hath covered our faces : for strangers
 52 are come into the sanctuaries of the LORD's house. Wherefore, behold, the days come, saith
 the LORD, that I will do judgement upon her graven images ; and through all her land the
 53 wounded shall groan. Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should
 fortify the height of her strength, yet from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the LORD.
 54 The sound of a cry from Babylon, and of great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans !
 55 for the LORD spoileth Babylon, and destroyeth out of her the great voice ; and their waves
 56 roar like many waters, the noise of their voice is uttered : for the spoiler is come upon her,
 even upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken, their bows are broken in pieces : for the
 57 LORD is a God of recompences, he shall surely requite. And I will make drunk her princes
 and her wise men, her governors and her deputies, and her mighty men ; and they shall sleep
 58 a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts. Thus
 saith the LORD of hosts : The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly overthrown, and her
 high gates shall be burned with fire ; and the peoples shall labour for vanity, and the nations
 for the fire ; and they shall be weary.

59 The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, the son of
 Mahseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah to Babylon in the fourth year of
 60 his reign. Now Seraiah was chief chamberlain. And Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil
 that should come upon Babylon, even all these words that are written concerning Babylon.
 61 And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, then see that thou read all
 62 these words, and say, O LORD, thou hast spoken concerning this place, to cut it off, that none
 63 shall dwell therein, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever. And it shall
 be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and
 64 cast it into the midst of Euphrates : and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall
 not rise again because of the evil that I will bring upon her : and they shall be weary.
 Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.

Chap. 51. Verses 1-4 are the very words of the Lord. Verses 5-13 are the words of the prophet. H. C.

5. "*Suffering, but not forsaken.*" Israel is not forsaken because she is driven from her home. Babylon is not more favored because she flourishes for a season as a "golden cup in the Lord's hand." For the land of the Chaldeans is filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel. Thus the truth is quite contrary to appearances. When God chastises His

people He must not be thought to have forsaken them. The chastisement is for their own good. It is, therefore, a proof that God has not neglected them. Instead of being an indication of hatred or indifference, chastisement is a sign of God's love. Moreover, when His people suffer God is peculiarly near to them, and often nearest in those dark hours when bitterness of soul prevents us from having any comforting hope in Him. *Adeney.*

Outward prosperity is not essential to signify

God's satisfaction with us. Nor must we infer that, because a backsliding Christian has fallen into trouble and misery, therefore God has forsaken him. The signs of man forsaking God are made very clear, so that there may be all possible incentives to repentance; but if God ever does forsake a man, leaving him utterly to his own folly and recklessness, no sign of it is given to us. There is quite enough already in our own wild fancies to make us desponding and despairing. Y.

10. The prophet speaks in the name of the Jews. "The Lord hath brought forth our righteousness" in the sense of pleading and avenging our cause and testifying His displeasure against our enemies and captors. Come and let us praise Him in our holy Temple and city, and speak of His deliverances there.

12, 13. This ruin of Babylon is God's retribution for her sins, especially against His Temple. Verse 12 intimates that ambushes would be among the agencies of this victory, in which the prophecy and the history are at one. Cyrus took the city by a species of grand ambushment, turning the river elsewhere and marching his army into the city through its dry channel. Verse 13 addresses Babylon as "dwelling upon many waters," with reference to her position on the great Euphrates, out of which she took large supplies of water for irrigation by canals, and thus literally "sat upon many waters." "The measure of her covetousness had come" in the sense that God now set a *limit* to her greed and grasp after unrighteous gain, shown in the exaction of unpaid labor from her hosts of captives. H. C.

19. Jehovah being the portion of Jacob, it is equally true that Jehovah's portion is His people (De. 32:9). God will be our inheritance just in proportion as we are God's inheritance. We cannot get satisfaction out of God unless He is getting satisfaction out of us. Our faith, our obedience, our devotion, are the conditions of His peculiar and richest bounty. Y.

24. The idea of retribution on Babylon for the evil they had brought on Zion before the very eyes of His people stands out prominently in verse 24, and really underlies the whole passage (verses 20-24).

26. That from her vast structures not a stone should be taken for the building of other cities is a very extraordinary prophecy, since it quite reverses the common law. In fact, large building stones *were never there*. Her immense structures were built of brick, either sun-dried or kiln-burned. Hence the great mass of these

materials lie to this day more or less decomposed in the mountains of rubbish which mark the site of that once magnificent city. But how came a prophet in Palestine to know that of the great structures of Babylon, most of them as yet unbuilt, men should take away no corner or foundation-stone when they should lie in ruins? How else can such minute and improbable, yet truthful predictions be accounted for except as inspired of God? H. C.

30. Looking at events on their human side, it is quite true to say that Abraham founded the Hebrew race, and that David founded the Jewish monarchy, and Judas rescued his country from destruction. But it is of supreme importance, if we would see God in history, and in the history of our own times in particular, to recognize in the sages, and heroes, and reformers, and also in the philosophers, and discoverers, and inventors, whose several labors have changed the aspect of the world at particular epochs, God's special instruments sent for that very thing; and to recognize in the changes brought about, not merely the action of those instruments, but the results of the will of God. As long as God is pleased to preserve a nation in greatness and power, He continues to raise up among them warriors, divines, men of genius and statesmen. When the set time of decadence is come, there arise no great men among them; their mighty men become as women (Jer. 51:30), and counsel perishes from the wise (*ibid.* 18:18). In applying these truths to our own Church and country it behooves us to remember that we owe all our own national prosperity, both in spiritual and temporal things, to the undeserved mercy of God; that the continuance of that prosperity depends upon the continuance of His favor; and that the only way by which to preserve that favor is to walk in righteousness and godliness. Unless God wills to maintain our power and greatness among the nations, all the courage and policy in the world will not suffice to do so; and even courage and policy may cease to grow among us. *Bp. Hervey.*

31, 32. The word rendered "post" means a *courier*, a runner. It need not surprise us that in this vast city, whose outer wall, according to Herodotus, was sixty miles in circumference, one end might be taken by the enemy some time before the other end would hear the tidings. These runners report to the king that the gates opening from the city to the river which ran through its centre are seized by the enemy; that the reeds (palisades) with which the banks were fortified to prevent an enemy

from gaining access to the city through the river-bed were burned with fire, and that the Chaldean soldiers were panic-stricken. No history could describe the progressive steps of this assault and capture with more precision than this prophecy written by Jeremiah before these vast walls of Babylon were even built. For all reliable history testifies that Nebuchadnezzar was *the* great builder of Babylon; that nearly all of its vast structures, including the city walls and the defences along the river bank, were either built or rebuilt by him. Yet the prophet saw things that were not as though they were, and so put on record this wonderfully minute account of their capture and ruin. H. C.

32. *That the passages are surprised.* These were most probably the entrances into the city from the river side, which were secured by gates, that ought, as Herodotus observes, to have been fast barred; which, if it had been done, would have effectually frustrated the attempt of the enemy; but, being left open and unguarded on account of the public festivity, the assailants were in possession of those entrances, and in the heart of the city before the besieged were aware of it. *Blayney.*

And the reeds they have burned with fire. The soldiers, seeing the Euphrates nearly dry, set fire to the reeds which covered its borders in order to facilitate the approach of the troops to the walls. The messengers reported to the king this circumstance for the purpose of signifying to him that all the waters round about Babylon were dried up, and that there was no longer anything to shelter the city from the enemy. These reeds are said to have been very large and high, and, together with the mud on which they stood, to have formed as it were another wall round the city. *Poole.*

33-35. The figures of the threshing-floor and of the harvest are common in the Hebrew poets to indicate the destruction of cities and the slaughter of their people. (Isa. 21:10; 17:5; Amos 1:3; Micah 4:13; Joel 3:13; Rev. 14:15, 18.) The ancient threshing instrument was a heavy roller, ridged with iron, drawn by animals, and made to crush both the straw and the grain with great force. Hence it vividly represented the instruments of Jehovah's vengeance on guilty nations. In verses 34 and 35, Judah and Jerusalem speak, recognizing the fall of Babylon as God's righteous retribution for her violence against the holy city and people. This is one of the most prominent thoughts in this entire prophecy against Babylon, the object being to assure the exiles

that the Lord remembered and would yet avenge them; would break down Babylon and release them to return to their own land. H. C.

34. *Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, hath devoured me.* A pathetic description of the calamities brought upon the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar and his forces, who, after they had devoured the wealth and laid waste the beauty of their country, then turned them out of it, and led them captives into a strange land. *W. Lowth.*

36. *I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry.* (See Isa. 14:23 and verse 31 of this chapter.) By the means there described, Babylon was taken, as here foretold. The city would have been otherwise impregnable, as it was supplied with provisions for many years, saith Herodotus; for more than twenty years, according to Xenophon; for, as Herodotus saith, if the Babylonians had but known what the Persians were doing, by shutting the gates which opened upon the river, and by standing upon the walls which were built as banks, they might have taken and destroyed the Persians as in a net or cage. *Bp. Newton.*

37. The foundations of Babylon were to fall, her lofty and broad walls were to be thrown down (Jer. 50:15), and she was not to present the appearance of a ruined city at all, but simply to "become heaps." It is the constant remark of travellers that what are called the ruins of Babylon are simply a succession of unsightly mounds, some smaller, some larger—"shapeless heaps of rubbish," "immense tumuli," elevations that might easily be mistaken for natural hills, and that only after careful examination convince the beholder that they are human constructions. The complete disappearance of the walls is particularly noticed; and the visitor, who has alone attempted to conjecture the position which they occupied, can mark no more than some half-dozen mounds along the line which he ventures to assign to them. Only a single fragment of a building still erects itself above the mass of rubbish whereof the mounds are chiefly composed, to show that human habitations really once stood where all is now ruin, decay and desolation.

When Babylon was standing in all its glory, with its great rampart walls from two hundred to three hundred feet high, with its lofty palaces and temple-towers, with its "hanging gardens," reckoned one of the world's wonders, and even its ordinary houses from three to four stories high, it was a bold prophecy that the whole would one day disappear—that

the edifices would all crumble into ruin, and the decomposed material cover up and conceal the massive towers and walls, presenting nothing to the eye but rounded hillocks, huge unsightly "heaps." It may be that such a fate had already befallen the great cities of Assyria, which had been destroyed nearly a century earlier, and which, from the nature of their materials, must have gone rapidly to decay. But the lessons of the past do not readily impress themselves on men; and it must have required a deep conviction of God's absolute foreknowledge on the part of the Hebrew prophets to publish it abroad, on the strength of a spiritual communication, that such a fate would overtake the greatest city of their day—"the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency" (Isa. 13:19). G. R.

42-44. The vast plains around Babylon were flooded by the Euphrates in its great freshets, presenting the appearance of an inland sea. (Cf. verses 13, 36.) To regulate these inundations, Nebuchadnezzar, with immense labor, constructed a vast reservoir, an inland lake, and then cut canals from this lake to irrigate the country when water was needed. But when the huge brick structures of Babylon became heaps of ruins, these canals and even the river itself were blocked up, and the whole plain was flooded during large portions of the year. Consequently, it passed from a state of most luxuriant fertility to one of utter barrenness, a vast quagmire, a continent of mud, marsh, bog, miasm, desolation! Thus was this wonderfully minute, and to human view improbable prophecy, literally fulfilled. Bel, the chief and patron god of Babylon, is thought of as having taken into his stomach the vast amount of treasures brought into his temple; but in righteous judgment, the great God compels him to disgorge it! The nations shall no more "*flow together*," making their long pilgrimages with votive offerings to his shrine. The word rendered "*flow together*," is the same which represents the confluence of the nations to Jehovah's Temple "in the latter days" (e.g., Isa. 2:2; Micah 4:1; Jer. 31:12). That the walls of Babylon should fall was a great event, which such a prophecy could not omit. Herodotus, an eye-witness, describes this double wall, an outer and an inner; the outer, three hundred and thirty-seven and a half feet high, eighty-five feet thick, with *one hundred* gates of brass. It was the wonder of the age—indeed, of the world. Yet under the mighty hand of God, how easily it was made to fall! H. C.

43. Not only the site of Babylon herself, but the whole plain of Babylonia, covered with the shapeless heaps under which the great Chaldean cities lie hidden, bears a perpetual witness to the truth of the prophecy, every word of which is a historic description: "Her cities are a desolation, a dry land and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby." "Besides the great mound," says the most distinguished investigator of the site, "other shapeless heaps of rubbish cover for many an acre the face of the land. The lofty banks of ancient canals fret the country, like natural ridges of hills. Some have been long choked with sand; others still carry the waters of the river to distant villages and palm-groves. On all sides fragments of glass, marble, pottery and inscribed brick are mingled with that peculiar nitrous and blanched soil which, bred from the remains of ancient habitations, checks or destroys vegetation, and renders the site of Babylon a naked and hideous waste. Owls start from the scanty thickets, and the foul jackal skulks through the furrows" (*Layard*). P. S.

51. This is what the exiles are supposed to say when exhorted to think of their own Jerusalem. "It is sad" (say they) "to think of her; we remember how the heathen reproached us, and how they laid unclean hands upon the most holy things of the house of our God."

54-56. Among numerous other indications of the ruin of Babylon, we have here the fearful outcry of terror at her fall, coupled also with the crash and the roar when her lofty towers and walls are seen in vision to fall to the ground. In the last clause of verse 55, "Her waves that roar like great waters," are probably her enemies rushing upon her with the shout of victory, and in point of the ruin they bring, resembling a mighty inundation. The next clauses show that the mind of the writer is on the invading hosts of spoilers.

58. This closing verse of this elaborate prophetic description sums up the most vital facts. The broad walls of Babylon, though eighty-five feet broad, and built apparently for immortality, shall be utterly broken. The original implies that their foundations shall be laid naked, the very ground on which they stood being made bare. Her hundred lofty gates shall be burned with fire. The armies of captives whose labor she employed for years in their erection will appear to have spent their strength and toil in vain, working and building only for the fire to destroy. And they shall be utterly exhausted, past all power to

recuperate their strength. This is the sense of "being weary." Hab. 2 : 13 treats of the same subject, and was perhaps in the mind of Jeremiah. The reader who shall carefully group together all the minute and special points of this prophecy will find himself already possessed with the great facts of that wonderful history. Let him note that Babylon is here a great city of vast extent ; of lofty and broad walls ; of a large foreign population, who scattered and fled each to his own country ; that her kings and princes were revelling in a drunken debauch on that fatal night ; that her armies were panic-stricken and forbore to fight ; that tidings first came to the king that his city was taken at one end ; that "the passages" from the city to the river were seized by the enemy, and the palisades that fortified those points were burned ; that her broad walls were levelled to the ground ; that a fearful ruin ultimately swept over her, and left nothing but emptiness and desolation ; that the sea covered her ; and, in another line of facts, that her destroyers came from the north ; that the Medes were prominent among them ; that there were many other great nations combined with them in this final conflict ; that they were armed with the bow, etc.—these are a portion of the definite points made in this prophecy, all which are definitely confirmed by historians who never read Jeremiah, and who, if they had, could have no interest in making out a fulfilment of his prophecies. Yet when Jeremiah wrote, *the* Babylon of the great Chaldean dynasty was yet in great measure to be made. Its immensely broad and lofty walls were yet to be built. Cyrus was yet unborn. The great Median power was scarcely known. The Divine providences which brought up those northern kingdoms, developed their strength and effected their combination, were yet to be unfolded. What mortal eye could pierce into that darkness of yet unmade history ? What human line could fathom those depths of the distant future ? Verily this cometh only of the wisdom of Him who "callesth the things that are not as though they were," and who can read to mortals their yet unmade history, because it is His province to shape the making of all human history. H. C.

Of its splendor under Nebuchadnezzar there can be no doubt. Pliny says, "It was the greatest city the sun ever shone upon." Isaiah called it the "Golden City." Its walls, three hundred feet in height, according to one of its historians, and seventy-five feet in breadth, appeared more like the bulwarks of nature than

the workmanship of man. They were regarded by Strabo as one of the seven wonders of the world. The entire area within its massive walls, according to Herodotus and Ctesias, its chief historians, was two hundred square miles. Its temples, its palaces, its fortresses, its brazen gates, its enamelled brick, its plated pillars, its huge embankments along the shores of the Euphrates, its artificial mountains as high as the dome of St. Peter's, its ornamental architecture, its artificial lakes, and its lofty palaces, with its hanging gardens piled in successive terraces to the top of its walls, displayed more of the mighty works of mortals than have ever elsewhere been concentrated in one spot on the earth. Such was Babylon. And yet, while the city was in its glory, while royal power defended it, one hundred and sixty years before the foot of an enemy had entered its gates or menaced its walls, the prophets of God declared that the spearmen and the horsemen from the north should deluge the city in blood, and that the Almighty Himself should sweep it with the besom of destruction. *L. T. Townsend.*

59-64. This passage stands here as a sequel to the prophecy against Babylon comprised in chaps. 50 and 51 : 1-58, showing especially that the prophet, having written it, committed it to Seraiah to carry to Babylon—he being one of the attendants of King Zedekiah in his journey to Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. Seraiah was directed, on arriving at Babylon, to read this prophecy ; then to repeat certain words here recited ; and, finally, to bind a stone to this roll and sink it in the Euphrates, saying, "Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil which I will bring upon her ; and they shall be weary"—*i.e.*, exhausted so as never to regain their national vigor and vitality. This Seraiah was not the one who bears this name in chap. 36 : 26, nor the other who bears this name in chap. 40 : 8, as is shown by the name of his father, Neriah. But he was a brother of Baruch, and therefore of a family who were warm and fast friends of the prophet. Seraiah manifestly held a place of responsible trust under Zedekiah. H. C.

63. This was a significant emblem of Babylon's sinking irrecoverably under the judgments here denounced against her. (Cf. Rev. 18 : 21.) This threatening was, in a literal sense, fulfilled. *W. Louth.*—This stone lost in one sense was not lost in another. Nay, it was serving a higher purpose than any it could have served simply as a stone. It became a

teacher, and it is a teacher still, warning all ambitious men and all neglecters of the commandments and predictions of Jehovah. Y. 64. <i>Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.</i> This	is probably mentioned to show that the next chapter was added by Ezra, or Baruch, or whoever collected this prophecy into one volume. <i>W. Louth.</i>
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JEREMIAH, CHAPTER LII., WITH HISTORY.

VERSES 1-11 ; 31-34, VOL. VII., PAGE 418.

VERSES 12-30, VOL. VII., PAGE 447.

BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

1 : 1 How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people !

How is she become as a widow !

She that was great among the nations, *and* princess among the provinces,

How is she become tributary !

2 She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks ;

Among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her :

All her friends have dealt treacherously with her,

They are become her enemies.

3 Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude ;

She dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest :

All her persecutors overtook her within the straits.

4 The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn assembly ;

All her gates are desolate, her priests do sigh :

Her virgins are afflicted, and she herself is in bitterness.

5 Her adversaries are become the head, her enemies prosper ;

For the LORD hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions :

Her young children are gone into captivity before the adversary.

6 And from the daughter of Zion all her majesty is departed :

Her princes are become like harts that find no pasture,

And they are gone without strength before the pursuer.

7 Jerusalem remembereth in the days of her affliction and of her miseries

All her pleasant things that were from the days of old :

When her people fell into the hand of the adversary, and none did help her,
The adversaries saw her, they did mock at her desolations.

8 Jerusalem hath grievously sinned ; therefore she is become as an unclean thing :
All that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness :

Yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward.

9 Her filthiness was in her skirts ; she remembered not her latter end ;

Therefore is she come down wonderfully ; she hath no comforter :

Behold, O LORD, my affliction ; for the enemy hath magnified himself.

10 The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things :

For she hath seen that the heathen are entered into her sanctuary,

Concerning whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation.

11 All her people sigh, they seek bread ;
They have given their pleasant things for meat to refresh the soul :

See, O LORD, and behold ; for I am become vile.

12 Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by ?

Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me,

Wherewith the LORD hath afflicted *me* in the day of his fierce anger.

13 From on high hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaieth against them :

He hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back ;

He hath made me desolate and faint all the day.

14 The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand ;

They are knit together, they are come up

- upon my neck ; he hath made my strength to fail :
- The Lord hath delivered me into their hands, against whom I am not able to stand.
- 15 The Lord hath set at nought all my mighty men in the midst of me ;
- He hath called a solemn assembly against me to crush my young men :
- The Lord hath trodden as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah.
- 16 For these things I weep ; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water ;
- Because the comforter that should refresh my soul is far from me :
- My children are desolate, because the enemy hath prevailed.
- 17 Zion spreadeth forth her hands ; there is none to comfort her ;
- The Lord hath commanded concerning Jacob, that they that are round about him should be his adversaries :
- Jerusalem is among them as an unclean thing.
- 18 The LORD is righteous ; for I have rebelled against his commandment :
- Hear, I pray you, all ye peoples, and behold my sorrow :
- My virgins and my young men are gone into captivity.
- 19 I called for my lovers, *but* they deceived me : My priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city,
- While they sought them meat to refresh their souls.
- 20 Behold, O LORD ; for I am in distress ; my bowels are troubled ;
- Mine heart is turned within me ; for I have grievously rebelled :
- Abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death.
- 21 They have heard that I sigh ; there is none to comfort me ;
- All mine enemies have heard of my trouble ; they are glad that thou hast done it :
- Thou wilt bring the day that thou hast proclaimed, and they shall be like unto me.
- 22 Let all their wickedness come before thee ;
- And do unto them, as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions :
- For my sighs are many, and my heart is faint.

THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS.

THIS book, like the several books of the Pentateuch, is denominated in Hebrew *Eicah* (How !) from its first word, and sometimes *Kinnoth* (Lamentations), from its subject. It is one of the books of the *Megilloth* or Roll among the Jews ; and because it relates to the ruin of their affairs, and contains promises of restoration, it is peculiarly prized, and frequently read. The five *Megilloth* are—Ecclesiastes, Canticles, Lamentations, Ruth and Esther. The whole current of antiquity and modern times have pointed out Jeremiah as the writer ; of this the style is a sufficient evidence. A. C.

Jerusalem, after the fall and ruin of the city at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans, long predicted by Jeremiah, is the general subject of all the five elegies ; of the three (first, second and fourth), in which considerable points of likeness occur : the first dwells on the sad, ruined city, Zion. The second sings of the *fons et origo* of the woe of Zion—Jehovah, who at last has carried out the awful threats of punishment on a wicked people. The theme of the fourth depicts the sufferings of the various classes of the people at the hands of their conquerors. The third of these elegies again is distinguished by the alphabetical structure

of the poetry. It is even more artificial in its arrangement than the first, second and fourth. It too dwells on the sorrow of the people, but it is more personal. The writer in this poem speaks of himself as “ the man that has seen the affliction.” *Spence*.

Among all Orientals, poetry and music lend their aid to the expression of grief. The Hebrews give a liberal space in their literature to elegiac song in the form of plaintive elegies in commemoration of the virtues of the dead, and in sad recollection of great calamities. The reader will at once recall the elegies of David upon the death of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1 : 17–27) ; of Abner (2 Sam. 3 : 33, 34), and of Absalom (2 Sam. 18 : 33). Jeremiah prepared a similar elegy on the death of Josiah (2 Chron. 35 : 25, 26). In the same strain, though more extended, are these “ lamentations” over the fall of Jerusalem, the defeat of her armies, the murder of her priests and princes, the fearful slaughter of her young men and maidens, and the utter desolation of her holy Temple. The third chapter is chiefly occupied with the prophet’s own personal trials and sorrows. The whole is in Hebrew poetry. The first four chapters are *acrostic*. In chaps. 1, 2 and 4 the successive verses begin with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet, twenty

two in number; while chap. 3 is composed in triplets of verses, each verse in the first triplet beginning with the first letter of the alphabet, and each verse of the second with the second letter, etc. This artificial arrangement would aid the memory, and may have been also a matter of literary taste. In their moral tone, these "lamentations" naturally partake somewhat deeply of the general character of such compositions among the Jews of that age. They are thoroughly elegiac. It follows almost or quite of necessity, that they contemplate the great subjects of public grief *as seen upon their human side*, and not merely as they would appear when considered in the light of a moral discipline sent of God, or in the light of that fearful apostasy from God which called for a retribution so signal as this. Yet coming from the hand of such a prophet as Jeremiah, we might naturally expect occasional allusions to the moral causes of these calamities—some recognitions of the anger of a just God, and some confessions of national sin. Such, in fact, we find. There is nothing in this Book of Lamentations to militate against its inspiration. It had a noble moral purpose. It availed itself most wisely of a current usage in regard to public lamentations in order to give direction to the feeling of public grief, and so to turn to good account the chastened sensibility of a deeply stricken people. The subject precludes all special messages from the Lord, whether of a prophetic or hortatory character. It would be out of place to look for them here. The phrase so oft recurring in the other book of Jeremiah, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts," does not occur in all this book. The only passage that seems in any wise prophetic is chap. 4: 21, 22, which gives an outlook upon the future doom of Edom and the termination of calamity on Zion. The third chapter differs widely in its general scope from all the others. It is thoroughly personal to the prophet, giving his own experiences, and not those of the people. There was good reason for his reciting thus his own personal trials and griefs. It was adapted to secure for him the sympathy of at least the more considerate among the people, and would help them to appreciate his character and his work. We have reason to be thankful for this chapter. All the other chapters were prepared for the use of the people, and were designed to represent their actual feelings of grief and sorrow, as also to lead them on to a proper recognition of the hand of the Lord, and into a spirit of due confession of sin and prayer for pardon. It is clear that this elegy

was written after the fall of the city and the destruction of the Temple. But whether written specially for the exiles in Chaldea, or specially for those in Egypt, or for both indiscriminately, the book affords no decisive data to show. Yet inasmuch as the remnant that went into Egypt were mostly cut off by the judgments of God, while those who went to Chaldea multiplied and ultimately furnished the returning pilgrims who replanted Judea and rebuilt Jerusalem, it cannot well be doubted that this book was sent to them, and by them preserved with the other sacred books. Jeremiah understood very well that the hope of the future Zion lay in that party and not in the Egyptian, and hence would have a special reason for whatever effort he could make for their moral culture. H. C.

The Legal or Forensic Element in the Book.

Are there evidences of a consciousness of this element as a present and operative influence? Let us look at the first chapter, by way of seeking for a reply to this question. In the fourth verse we find the prophet lamenting on behalf of Zion that *none come to her solemn feasts*, but that her *ways mourn*. Now this word rendered *solemn feast* is the one used in Exodus and elsewhere of the appointed *feasts* of the Lord; it is that after which the tabernacle of the congregation, or tent of meeting, was named. It is clear, therefore, that the prophet refers to some such kind of gathering as is contemplated and provided for in the Law. At the time of the Captivity, when he wrote, the observance of these feasts, which had been a custom of old, had ceased. But besides this he refers to the principle of centralization by which they are characterized, and implies that they were held in Zion, and that the people went up to Zion to keep them. Now there must have been some reason for this custom, to the observance of which his language is a witness. But we know that this principle of centralization was a main feature of the legal system, so much so that on the establishment of the second kingdom, Jeroboam made a point of imitating it.

Again, the prophet speaks also, in verses 4, 7 and 19, of *her priests*, and *her sabbaths*, and *her elders*, and alludes in verse 8 to legal separation on account of uncleanness; so that, in addition to a recognized priesthood and company of elders, we have two main features of the law implied in the remarkably characteristic institution of the Sabbath and in the stringent pro-

visions for ceremonial uncleanness found in it. In the tenth verse we have express reference to the regulations of De. 23, and a clear proof that the prophet regarded these regulations as divine. This is the more remarkable because they are only found in the fifth book of the law. We may just notice the mention of the Nazarites in 4 : 7, implying the law in Num. 6, but otherwise it is not necessary to pursue this examination further. Any one can do so for himself. This first chapter is taken only as a specimen of a book of the Captivity period, such as the Lamentations are. It affords undeniable testimony to the national condition of that period, and to what it must have been for many generations previously. *Leathes.*

Chap. 1 : 1, 2. *The contrasts of adversity.* The key-note of this strain of sorrow, this poetical and pathetic dirge, is struck in the opening words of the composition. The heart of the prophet laments over the captured and ruined city. How natural that the present should recall the past ! Jerusalem, now in the hands of the Chaldeans, was once, in the days of David and of Solomon, the scene of glory and the seat of empire, the joy of the whole earth. So much the sadder is the contrast, the deeper the fall, the bitterer the cup of woe. T.

2. In her distress Jerusalem looks for comfort to those neighboring nations which flattered her during her prosperity and behaved then as "lovers;" but she is disappointed in finding that they all desert her in the hour of her need. Jerusalem had her "lovers." This fact throws a significant light on the statement that she had "become as a widow" (verse 1). What shame that she, the wife of the Eternal, should have to be spoken to of "lovers" ! But having them, she must find her comfort in them. She dare not look to her husband for comfort. In plainer language, the Jews had adopted the idolatry of neighboring nations as well as renounced the exclusive and retiring position which had been required of them by their God. It was fitting that they should find their consolation from the Babylonian invasion in these foreign connections and religions. If we let our business, our pleasure, our ambition, or any other earthly thing usurp the place of God in our hearts, the time will come when we shall have to try what help we can get in trouble from our idol. *Adeney.*

Nights of weeping explained. The metaphor is kept up with which this first song of lamentation begins. The sensitiveness of the woman-nature helps to bring out the prostration of Je-

rusalem. It is not only that her *condition* is lamentable, but she herself is a prey to the keenest anguish. People do not always see their own sad state as others see it. There is either a shallowness of nature or something has happened to deaden the sensibilities. But in this verse we have both the mention of tears and of most sufficient causes for tears. Y.

4. *The abandoned feasts.* Jerusalem was the religious centre of the nation. Thither the tribes came up to present themselves before the Lord. Great assemblies and joyous feasts were held there for the benefit of all the Jews. But after the Babylonian destruction all this was suspended. None now came to the solemn feasts. The high-roads which were wont to be thronged with pilgrims mourn for the lack of travellers ; the gates through which they used to press are unused ; priests sigh with weariness and distress, having no glad offerings to present ; and the virgins who led the song and dance in honor of God are smitten with affliction. *Adeney.*

Zion forsaken as a religious centre. The ways of Zion mourned now, but the very fact that such a thing should be said showed that they had once been filled with rejoicing. The gates had been crowded with worshippers from every district of the land. Zion was glorified as the site of the Temple, and the Temple was glorified as holding within its imposing walls the ark of the covenant. Zion was the city of solemnities. Things were done there not according to will worship or mere immemorial tradition, but according to Jehovah's definite instructions given in the wilderness through Moses centuries before. Praise continually waited for God in Zion. Jehovah loved the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. There was no day without its morning and evening sacrifice, and every Sabbath and new moon brought their peculiar additions. Nor must we forget the feast of the Passover, of the first fruits, of the Pentecost, and the great feast of the seventh month. If as nothing more than times of mirth and relaxation, these would play a large part in the life of the people, and true prophets and who soever among the priests had deep reverence for God would get much strength out of these services, finding in them, according to the measure of their faith, zeal and diligence, constant means of grace. Y.

The decline of national religion. Nowhere has the great truth of the close dependence of national prosperity upon national religion been more plainly and emphatically taught than in

the writings of the Hebrew prophets. Their spiritual insight detected the true cause of national degradation. Whoever looks below the surface may see that the decline and fall of nations may usually be traced to spiritual causes, to the loss of any hold upon eternal principles of righteousness and piety. T.

5. The sins of Jerusalem are here complained of as the procuring, provoking cause of all these calamities. Whoever are the instruments, God is the author of all these troubles; it is the Lord that has afflicted her (verse 5), and He has done it as a righteous judge, for she has sinned. H.

6. *Her beauty departed from Zion.* The dwellings of Zion shone splendid in cedar and gold. A softer beauty was shed over her from old memories and tender associations. The spiritual Zion has her beauty. It is not the magnificence of marble columns and gilded decorations. The beauty of Zion is the beauty of her worship and life. Adeney.

7. *All her pleasant things.* What these pleasant things are we may learn from Isa. 64:11, where, to the complaint of the burning of the Temple, it is added, All our pleasant things are laid waste; the ark and the altar and all the other tokens of God's presence with them, these were their pleasant things above any other things, and these were now broken to pieces and carried away. Thus from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed (verse 6). The beauty of holiness was the beauty of the daughter of Zion; when the Temple, that holy and beautiful house, was destroyed, her beauty was gone; that was the breaking of the staff of beauty, the taking away of the pledges and seals of the covenant (Zech. 11:10). H.

The recollection of the past may be the occasion of the highest joy or of the profoundest sorrow. To remember former happiness is one of the great pleasures of human life, if that happiness did but lead on to its own continuance and increase. The first beginnings of a delightful friendship, the first steps of a distinguished career, are remembered by the prosperous and happy with satisfaction and joy. It is otherwise with the memory of a morning of brightness which soon clouded, and which was followed by storms and darkness. In the text the anguish of Jerusalem is pictured as intensified by the recollection of bygone felicity. T.

It is foolish to yield to fond regrets of the pleasant things in the days of old. The past cannot be recalled. Let it die. The future is ours. The west will not brighten again with a return

of the fading glow of sunset, but a new day will break in the east. We may call to mind the happy things in days of old, not to increase our present distress, *but to encourage hope.* The sun did shine, then it may shine again. God is the same now as ever. If He blessed in the past He can bless in the future. Former mercies encourage us to hope for better things still to come. Adeney.

9-11. Jerusalem's God is here complained to, concerning all these things, and all is referred to His compassionate consideration (verse 9), "O Lord, behold my affliction, and take cognizance of it;" and (verse 11), "See, O Lord, and consider, take order about it." The only way to make ourselves easy under our burdens is to cast them upon God first, and leave it to Him to do with us as seemeth Him good. H.

10. *Spoilation and profanation.* The presence of a foreign foe in its capital has always been regarded, and is still regarded, as among the heaviest calamities that can befall a nation. In our own times, a neighboring nation has been required to endure this humiliation and indignity, shocking its patriotism and its pride. We can understand how bitter must have been the anguish of the Jews when the Chaldean hosts patrolled their city, quartered themselves upon its inhabitants, appropriated its wealth, and violated the sanctity of its Temple. T.

11. *The real need of the soul made manifest by experience.* The greatest need of the natural life is bread, taking the word "bread" as representative of all food. Clothing and shelter, while they may indeed be reckoned as needs, are not needs after the same imperative fashion as food; and every one, however easily his daily bread comes to him, will assent to this same general truth that food is the great need of natural life. But he will only really feel this in such circumstances as are indicated in this verse. For a long while these people of Jerusalem had found bread lying to their hands when they were hungry. They could buy it, and have abundance of pleasant things beside. The feeling of their hearts was that they could not do without these pleasant things, and when at last they gave them up to keep body and soul together, it must have been with terrible pain they made the surrender. And what is true of bread for the natural life is also true of the Bread coming down from heaven for the spiritual life. Christians, living in the midst of all manner of pleasant things of this world, with no lack of money to buy them and faculty to enjoy them, try to feel at the same time that more than all pleasant things are the grace, the

life, the wisdom, the everflowing fulness of the Spirit, which come from Christ. But all the testimony of believers proves that the pleasant things need to be withdrawn before it can be apprehended that Christ is emphatically the Bread. It is when we lose relish of nature's best contributions to our happiness that Christ comes forward, confident as ever in His power to satisfy us. Y.

12-22. The complaints here are for substance the same with those in the foregoing part of the chapter; but in these verses the prophet, in the name of the lamenting Church, does more particularly acknowledge the hand of God in these calamities, and the righteousness of His hand. H.

12. *Sorrow unequalled, yet unheeded.* Jerusalem sits alone in her unparalleled grief, and the bitterness of it is intensified by the pitiless disregard of spectators. Bedouins of the desert pitch their tents in sight of her ruined towers, and merchants passing north and south see her deserted streets, and yet all gaze unmoved at the heart-rending picture. *Never was city more favored than Jerusalem.* She was the chosen seat of Divine grace. In her Temple stood God's mercy-seat. High privileges of revelation and spiritual blessings descended on her sons and daughters. The loss of these privileges brought a distress that men who had never enjoyed them could not feel. They who have tasted of the heavenly gift will find the outer darkness more terrible than those who have had no anticipation of the joys of the wedding feast. Apostate Christians will suffer agonies which the heathen and godless will not have to endure. *Never was city more loved than Jerusalem.* This city of sacred memories and tender associations was dear to the hearts of her inhabitants. Her overthrow brought a grief that was proportionate to this love. The most fatal wound is one aimed at the heart. We are pained most cruelly when we are wounded in affection. What grief can be greater than that of parents for ruined children, and especially when the parents' sin has been the children's temptation? *Never was city more visited by Divine wrath than Jerusalem.* Here is the secret of her deepest trouble. She is afflicted in the day of God's fierce anger. God is most angry with her because she has sinned against most light, most ungratefully, and most rebelliously. *Adeney.*

The bitter tears shed by our Saviour over impenitent Jerusalem are shadowed forth in the prophet's prolonged and profound lament over his own idolatrous and disobedient coun-

trymen. His well-known words, "Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by?" uttered concerning the sorrows of Jerusalem and her people, have come to be so universally appropriated to our Lord, that the prophet's own deep distress which they tell of, and the occasion of that distress, are alike almost if not entirely forgotten. "His sufferings come nearest of those of the whole army of martyrs to those of the Teacher against whom princes, and priests, and elders, and people were gathered together." To him, as to the great apostle, was it given to know "the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and to be made conformable unto His death." P. C.

She sits by the highway, and the crowd passes on, taking no notice. The spectacle of a conquered nation and a pillaged capital was not a rare thing. The nations asked to sympathize had been through the same experience themselves. We are all prompted to say, "Surely no trouble has been like our trouble;" and yet, as our observation of human affairs enlarges, we see how human nature, in every individual instance, is made to know its extraordinary capacity for suffering. Nevertheless, the piteous appeal here is not a baseless one. The trouble of the children of Israel had not come upon them after the manner of a common nation. They were peculiar in constitution, privileges and history. If only there had been eyes to see it, there was something very significant to demand attention. But the thing to be seen did not lie on the surface, nor was it to be discovered save by faculties specially illuminated. The downfall and the sufferings of Israel, as they are to be seen both in the Scriptures and subsequent history, belong to the things that are to be spiritually discerned. Therefore this complaint, while superficially it may be called unreasonable, is yet reasonable enough, if we only consider the position and mission of Israel, and the work which, even in her degradation, she has done for the world. Here was a nation that in obedience might have rested confidently and happily in Jehovah's promise. The power behind that promise was more than all the armies of the great empires round about. But when the power was withdrawn it meant not merely suffering; the withdrawing had in it the nature of a judicial, solemn sentence from Jehovah Himself. Y.

14, 15. Figures of speech are multiplied; a yoke on her neck, made up of her sins and bound by the hand of God, against which she has no strength; the Lord "treading under foot her mighty men;" making all their strength of

no account; and finally treading down the daughter (whole people) of Judah as grapes are trodden in a wine-press. H. C.

18. The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled. Righteousness in God is conformity with truth, justice and honor. It means that God has no subtle double-dealing, but acts in perfect integrity. He moves in straight lines. Further, it means that God is fair to all, doing, if not the same thing to each, which would often be unjust, that which is fitting for every one. It also includes God's regard for the standard of right in His government, His care to make His creatures righteous, and His determination to check all unrighteousness. *Why we are to believe in it.* It is declared most forcibly by those who know God best. Sceptical strangers may doubt it; but they who have entered into the presence of God, whether in holiness or in inspiration, alike

agree in testifying to the righteousness of God. The deeper our Christian experience the more shall we be brought to admit this great truth. *Adency.*

The spirit of our life determines, by a most fixed law, the way in which God will treat us. It is perfectly impossible for the disobedient to escape suffering. But it is equally impossible for the obedient to lose their reward. Joy and blessedness, the exquisite peace and rapture of holiness, must come to them by the very nature of things. Y.

20. The cry of the contrite. Trouble, when it leads to an inquiry into its cause, when it prompts to submission and to repentance, proves a means of grace. The cry of suffering and distress may have no moral significance; the cry of contrition and of supplication is a sign of spiritual impression, and is a step toward spiritual recovery. T.

LAMENTATIONS, CHAPTER II.

2:1 How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger!

He hath cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel,
And hath not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger.

2 The Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied;

He hath thrown down in his wrath the strong holds of the daughter of Judah;
He hath brought them down to the ground:
He hath profaned the kingdom and the princes thereof.

3 He hath cut off in fierce anger all the horn of Israel;

He hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy:

And he hath burned up Jacob like a flaming fire, which devoureth round about.

4 He hath bent his bow like an enemy, he hath stood with his right hand as an adversary,

And hath slain all that were pleasant to the eye:

In the tent of the daughter of Zion he hath poured out his fury like fire.

5 The Lord is become as an enemy, he hath swallowed up Israel;

He hath swallowed up all her palaces, he hath destroyed his strong holds:

And he hath multiplied in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation.

6 And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were of a garden;

He hath destroyed his place of assembly:

The Lord hath caused solemn assembly and sabbath to be forgotten in Zion,

And hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest.

7 The Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary,

He hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces:

They have made a noise in the house of the Lord, as in the day of a solemn assembly.

8 The Lord hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion;

He hath stretched out the line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying:

But he hath made the rampart and wall to lament; they languish together.

- 9 Her gates are sunk into the ground ; he hath destroyed and broken her bars :
Her king and her princes are among the nations where the law is not ;
Yea, her prophets find no vision from the Lord.
- 10 The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, they keep silence ;
They have cast up dust upon their heads ; they have girded themselves with sack-cloth :
The virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground.
- 11 Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled,
My liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people ;
Because the young children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city.
- 12 They say to their mothers, Where is corn and wine ?
When they swoon as the wounded in the streets of the city,
When their soul is poured out into their mothers' bosom.
- 13 What shall I testify unto thee ? what shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem ?
What shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion ?
For thy breach is great like the sea : who can heal thee ?
- 14 Thy prophets have seen visions for thee of vanity and foolishness ;
And they have not discovered thine iniquity, to bring again thy captivity :
But have seen for thee burdens of vanity and causes of banishment.
- 15 All that pass by clap their hands at thee ;
They hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, *saying* :
Is this the city that men called The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth ?
- 16 All thine enemies have opened their mouth wide against thee ;
- They hiss and gnash the teeth ; they say,
We have swallowed her up ;
Certainly this is the day that we looked for ;
we have found, we have seen it.
- 17 The LORD hath done that which he devised ;
He hath fulfilled his word that he commanded in the days of old ;
He hath thrown down, and hath not pitied :
And he hath caused the enemy to rejoice over thee,
He hath exalted the horn of thine adversaries.
- 18 Their heart cried unto the Lord :
O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night ;
Give thyself no respite ; let not the apple of thine eye cease.
- 19 Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches ;
Pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord :
Lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children,
That faint for hunger at the top of every street.
- 20 See, O LORD, and behold, to whom thou hast done thus !
Shall the women eat their fruit, the children that are dandled in the hands ?
Shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord ?
- 21 The youth and the old man lie on the ground in the streets ;
My virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword :
Thou hast slain them in the day of thine anger ; thou hast slaughtered, *and* not pitied.
- 22 Thou hast called, as in the day of a solemn assembly, my terrors on every side,
And there was none that escaped or remained in the day of the LORD's anger :
Those that I have dandled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed.

Chap. 2. The strain of this chapter goes first to show that God has brought on Zion these fearful calamities for her great sins ; and then to spread before the Lord the details of her sufferings as an appeal to His compassion. H. C.

1-9. It is a very sad representation which is here made of the state of God's Church, of Jacob and Israel, of Zion and Jerusalem ; but the emphasis in these verses seems to be laid all along upon the hand of God in the calamities

which they were groaning under. The grief is not so much that such and such things are done, as that God has done them, that He appears angry with them ; it is He that chastens them, and chastens them in wrath and in His hot displeasure ; He is become their enemy, and fights against them ; and this is the worm-wood and the gall in the affliction and the misery. H.

1. *The anger of the Lord.* Men have fallen into two opposite extremes of opinion and of

feeling with regard to the anger of the Lord. There have been times when they have been wont to attribute to the Eternal the passions of imperfect men, when they have represented the holy God as moved by the storms of indignation, as subject to the impulses of caprice and the instigations of cruelty. But in our own days the tendency is the contrary to this; men picture God as all amiability and forbearance, as regarding the sinful and guilty with indifference, or at all events without any emotion of displeasure. Scripture warrants neither of these extremes. T.

God not remembering His footstool. The ark was regarded as God's footstool; and the Temple in which the ark was kept was also sometimes called the footstool of God. When the Temple was destroyed and the ark stolen, or broken, or lost, it looked as though God had forgotten His footstool. The symbolism of the ark and the ritual connected with it give a peculiar significance to this fact. *Adeney.*

3, 4. The "horn," as usual, is an emblem of power. The Lord had broken down all the military strength of the Jews. In the next clause, the Hebrew might mean either that God had withdrawn His right hand as one who would help His people no more, or that He had caused the right hand of His people to turn back before their enemy. The ultimate sense is substantially the same. H. C.

4, 5. *The Lord may become to us as an enemy.* We must not suppose the relations of God to those who forsake Him to be purely negative. He cannot simply leave them to their own devices. He is a King who must needs maintain order and restrain and punish rebellion, a Judge who cannot permit law to be trampled underfoot with impunity, a Father who cannot abandon His children, but must chastise them in their wrong-doing just because He is so closely related to them. Let it be well understood, then, that in opposing ourselves to God, we run counter to a power, a will, an active authority. We provoke the anger of God. We do not simply strike ourselves against the stone, we cause the stone to fall upon us and grind us to powder. *Adeney.*

If Israel had to say, "Jehovah acts as an enemy toward us," Jehovah had to say, "My people act as an enemy toward Me." These people had now for a long time been travelling in the wrong way, and it was in the very nature of things that the more they advanced the more opposition should multiply and become intensified. God not only appeared to be an enemy, but in certain respects He really was an

enemy. He hated the evil that had risen to such a height among those whom He had taken for His own. Our love for evil is ever the measure of His hate of it; and the more determined we are to cling to it, the more His hostility will appear. God Himself always keeps in the same path of law and righteousness and order. When we, according to our measure, follow in His footsteps, then real opposition there cannot be; but the moment we think fit to become a law to ourselves and do what is right in our own eyes, then inevitably He must oppose us. Y.

6, 7. *The rejected altar.* In the first elegy we read how the feasts are neglected by the people (chap. 1:4). Now we see that God Himself has broken them up and cast off His altar. Thus we advance a stage in understanding the deplorable condition of Jerusalem. At first the human side only is seen and the visible facts are lamented over. Then the Divine side is discerned and the terrible cause of the cessation of the solemn festivals revealed. It is not simply that the people cease to present themselves before the altar. God has abandoned and rejected all the Temple services. *Adeney.*

There are occasions when it is well to ponder seriously the calamities which befall a nation, to lay them to heart, to inquire into their causes, and to seek earnestly and prayerfully the way of deliverance, the means of remedy. "They that lack time to mourn lack time to mend." T.

The solemn feasts and the sabbaths had been carefully remembered, and the people constantly put in mind of them; but now the Lord has caused those to be forgotten, not only in the country among those that lived at a distance, but even in Zion itself; for there were none left to remember them, nor were there the places left where they used to be observed. Now that Zion was in ruins, no difference was made between sabbath times and other times; every day was a day of mourning, so that all the solemn feasts were forgotten. It is just with God to deprive those of the benefit and comfort of sabbaths and solemn feasts who have not duly valued them nor conscientiously observed them, but have profaned them, which was one of the sins that the Jews were often charged with. H.

9, 10. Beautifully this elegy groups together those elements which made Jerusalem the joy of the whole land; not her gates and bars alone, but her kings and princes, her administration of law, and her prophets receiving visions from the Lord. All these had gone.

H. C.

9. *The prophetic office suspended.* There is something of a climax about this statement that the prophets find no vision from Jehovah. Jeremiah has already spoken of God destroying the outward resources and defences of Jerusalem. Next, he mentions the exile of the king and the chief men, and then, as if to hint that it was a still greater calamity, he tells us how the prophet had no longer anything to see or to say. He did well to magnify his own office; for no office could be more important than that of the man whom God chose to communicate needed messages to his fellow-men. Y.

The writer laments the loss of teaching and vision as abnormal and disastrous. The vision of the prophets was not simply nor chiefly concerned with the distant future and recondite counsels of providence. It dealt with present facts and unveiled their true character. It guided in the present and with regard to the uncertainties of the very near future. The humbler office of teaching was associated with it. The prophet, a seer of visions in private and on special occasions, was a teacher among his fellow-men and under ordinary circumstances. It is important to see how essential the knowledge of truth is to a healthy spiritual life. Without it devotion becomes superstition. Religion is based on revelation. The school precedes the workshop. Teaching must prepare the way for service. *Adeney.*

The eternal law of righteousness, the ever-living witness of spiritual prophecy, can never cease. The words, the commandments and prohibitions, the outward ordinances, might pass away for a season of Divine displeasure, might be absorbed in the fuller revelation of the Gospel. But the principles of the moral law, the obligations of unchanging righteousness, can never cease; for they are the expression of the mind and will of Him whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. The vision may no longer be granted to the seer of Jerusalem; the city may stone her prophets or the Lord Himself remove them. But every purified eye shall through all time behold God's glory, and the ear that is open to truth and love shall not cease to recognize the voice of God. T.

11. Jeremiah speaks here in his own behalf, giving utterance to the grief of his heart. Yet any Jew who should read or chant this plaintive song might use these words of himself as expressing his own bitterness of soul. H. C.

12. *The suffering of the children.* It must be noticed how the mention of the children follows on the mention of the elders. There is suffering at each extreme of life, and hence we

are to infer that there is suffering all between. The elders suffer in their way and the children suffer in theirs. The elders are bowed down with confusion, shame and disappointment. The children know nothing of this, but they are tormented with the pangs of hunger; and what a pathetic touch is that which represents them as breathing out their little lives into the bosom of their mothers! The sins of the parents are being visited upon the children. It has often been represented as a monstrous iniquity that things should be put in such a light, but is it not an undeniable fact that the little ones suffer what they would not suffer if progenitors always did what was right? These children were not clamoring for dainties and luxuries. Corn and wine, the common food, the pleasant grape-juice, what they had been used to and what all at once they began to miss. What is here said is a strong admonition to us to consider how the innocent and unsuspecting may be affected by our unrighteousness. All our conduct *must* affect others, and it *may* affect those who cannot lift a hand to avert ill consequences. The sufferings of children and infants, the immense mortality among them—these are things awful to contemplate; and yet nothing can be more certain than that the clearing away of prejudice and ignorance and hurtful habits founded on bare tradition would bring into child-life that abundance of joy which a loving Creator of human nature meant children to attain. But even with all the suffering there are compensations. These hunger-stricken children cried for bread, and getting none they poured out their lives into their mothers' bosoms; but they had no self-reproach. Remorse did not add another degree of agony to starvation. Y.

13. The captive city is a picture of the desolation and misery to which (sooner or later) sin will surely bring all those who submit themselves to it. The commiseration shown by the prophet is an example of the state of mind with which the pious should contemplate the ravages of sin and the wretchedness of sinful men. The Gospel forbids despondency over even the most utter debasement and humiliation of man. "There is balm in Gilead; there is a Physician there." T.

14. Very pertinently the prophet refers to this active and prolific cause of her ruin, the influence of the false prophets. The reader will recall the frequent allusions to the false prophets in the other Book of Jeremiah (chaps. 2: 8; 5: 30, 31; 14: 13-16; 23: 9-40; 27: 14-18; 29: 8, 9). The visions which they saw for

the people were vain and foolish, false and without good sense. They did not remove the cloak which concealed the sins of the people—so the original implies; but had suffered those sins to remain hidden from view, and indeed had done what they could to keep them out of sight. If they had honestly exposed those sins, they might have forestalled the captivity and saved the nation. H. C.

There are the deep things of God to be penetrated and explored by those willing to receive the insight. The Holy Spirit of God, offered so abundantly through Christ, is a Spirit of prophecy to all who have it. They need no formal prophet, inasmuch as they have a word, living and piercing, to all who take a right relation toward it. God means us to be occupied with serious, substantial matters, so large and deep and fruitful that we shall never outgrow our interest in them. The heart of man in its meditating power was made for great themes. The heart can never be *filled* with mere trifles. That is good advice given to preachers of the Gospel to speak most on the greatest themes, such as are set forth again and again in the Scriptures, and whether these things be preached about or not, every individual Christian should think about them. For while we cannot secure the topics of preachers, the topics of our own thoughts depend upon ourselves. It is just those who concern themselves a great deal about dogmas who are also most interested in the details of life and conduct.

These prophets felt bound to magnify their office and say something. They ought to have spoken the truth; but for this they lacked inclination and perhaps courage. The next best thing would have been to remain silent; but then where would the prophet-reputation have been? and, more serious question still with some, what would have become of the prophet emoluments? Hence we have here the double iniquity that the false was spoken and the true concealed. The prophets could only get credit for their falsehoods by a careful concealment of the truth. They had, as it were, to paste on truth a conspicuous label, proclaiming far and wide, "This is a lie." This verse suggests how they had the common experience of one lie leading on to another. The true prophet said that the burden Israel had to bear and the exile into which it had to go arose from its iniquities. Whereas the false, or rather the unfaithful prophet, having set iniquity as the cause of trouble altogether on one side, could only go on inventing explanations which explained nothing. Ezek. 13 is a chapter which

may very profitably be read in connection with this verse. The great lesson is to search for truth no matter with what toil, and keep it no matter at what cost. Y.

15. *The glory and the shame of Jerusalem.* Contrast with misery escaped heightens the joy of the rescued and the happy; and, on the other hand, contrast with bygone prosperity adds to the wretchedness of those who are fallen from high estate. There is a day of visitation which it behoves every child of privilege and mercy to use aright. To neglect that day is surely to entail a bitter overtaking by the night of calamity and destruction. T.

16. *The triumph of the foe over the Church.* The fall of Jerusalem was the fall of the Church. The enemies of the Eternal rejoiced in the destruction of His Temple and the scattering of His people. There are always adversaries on the lookout for disaster in the Church of Christ. The evil spirit of the world is vexed and shamed by the standing rebuke of a pure Church. Corrupt men see in her an example contrasting with their own conduct and thereby condemning it. Thus there arise dislike and enmity. The shame of the Church is a relief to this worldly opposition. There have been times when the name of God has been insulted through this evil pleasure of the wicked in the shame that the sin and failure of His people have brought upon His cause. Here is a motive for preserving the sanctity of the Christian Church. The loss of it will not merely involve suffering to the Church herself; it will encourage the foes of Christ by giving them the elation of victory, and it will dishonor His name by making His work appear unworthy of Him. *Adeney.*

17. True to his mission as a prophet, and to his sense of the great sins of the people, Jeremiah returns continually to this vital truth, *The Lord has brought this calamity on the people for their sins.* He had threatened it long centuries ago. (See De. 28: 15-67; Lev. 26: 14-39.) Now that the day of vengeance can be delayed no longer, He hath thrown down His Zion without pity; hath lifted her adversaries to power, and let them rejoice over her fall. H. C.

Ruin from God. In the fifteenth and sixteenth verses we find strangers and enemies indulging in unseemly jubilation over the fall of Jerusalem. Now, we see—what they do not see—that the cause of that fall was the direct action of God. This fact aggravates the dismay and wretchedness of the suffering city, for it signifies that her own King and Friend has

brought about her ruin—not outsiders and antagonists. God Himself has handed her over to the contempt and derision of the world. At the same time, the sight of God's hand in the calamity reveals the folly of the world's triumph. How shallow and ignorant that appears to be directly the veil which covers the awful action of God is lifted! Man's spite and malice sink into insignificance before the awful wrath of God, as the growling of beasts of the forest is drowned in the dread roar of thunder. The triumph of man is also shown to be misplaced. Man has not done the deed. He is but a spectator. This is a dread work of God. Let human passion be hushed before the solemn sight. *Adeney.*

18, 19. *The entreaty of anguish.* This surely is one of those passages which justify the title of this book; these utterances are “lamentations” indeed; never did human sorrow make of language anything more resembling a wail than this. *T.*

19. The citizens have sunk down in sullen despair. Night has come like a cloak to cover the scenes of misery and death. Then a voice rings through the darkness, “Arise, cry out.” This voice bids all hearers pour out their hearts in prayer to God. *Adeney.*

20. It is a sad picture, and the Lord would surely have felt the most tender compassion over it, and indeed would never have either

done or permitted it but for the presence of awful sin which He “could not pardon.” Those mothers had burned some of their own children in the fire to Baal and Moloch. Those prophets and priests had utterly apostatized from God, and with their prodigious influence had drawn the whole people away from even common morality, and from the worship of the true God to the mad worship of idols.

22. As in the solemn assemblies on the national Jewish festivals, the people came in crowds and thronged the courts of the Temple, so the Lord had now summoned the awful terrors of war and carnage to throng thick around, so omnipresent indeed that none could escape. Even those who were yet in helpless infancy the cruel enemy had utterly destroyed. *H. C.*

My terrors on every side . . . none escaped. The selfish, sinful man may get the evil day put off; he may find gate after gate opening, as he thinks, to let him away from trouble and pain; but in truth he is only going deeper and deeper into the corner where he will be completely shut up. God can surround us with providences and protections if we are willing to trust Him. No other power can surround us with causes of terror. Our own hearts may imagine a menacing circle, but it only exists in imagination. If we seek the Lord He will hear us and deliver us from all our fears (*Ps. 34:4*). *Y.*

LAMENTATIONS, CHAPTER III.

3:1 I AM the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.

2 He hath led me and caused me to walk in darkness and not in light.

3 Surely against me he turneth his hand again and again all the day.

4 My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones.

5 He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travail.

6 He hath made me to dwell in dark places, as those that have been long dead.

7 He hath fenced me about, that I cannot go forth; he hath made my chain heavy.

8 Yea, when I cry and call for help, he shutteth out my prayer.

9 He hath fenced up my ways with hewn stone, he hath made my paths crooked.

10 He is unto me as a bear lying in wait, as a lion in secret places.

11 He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces; he hath made me desolate.

12 He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow.

13 He hath caused the shafts of his quiver to enter into my reins.

- 14 I am become a derision to all my people ;
and their song all the day.
- 15 He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath
sated me with wormwood.
- 16 He hath also broken my teeth with gravel
stones, he hath covered me with ashes.
- 17 And thou hast removed my soul far off
from peace ; I forgot prosperity.
- 18 And I said, My strength is perished, and
mine expectation from the LORD.
- 19 Remember mine affliction and my misery,
the wormwood and the gall.
- 20 My soul hath them still in remembrance,
and is bowed down within me.
- 21 This I recall to my mind, therefore have I
hope.
- 22 *It is of* the LORD's mercies that we are not
consumed, because his compassions fail
not.
- 23 They are new every morning ; great is thy
faithfulness.
- 24 The LORD is my portion, saith my soul ;
therefore will I hope in him.
- 25 The LORD is good unto them that wait for
him, to the soul that seeketh him.
- 26 It is good that a man should hope and
quietly wait for the salvation of the
LORD.
- 27 It is good for a man that he bear the yoke
in his youth.
- 28 Let him sit alone and keep silence, because
he hath laid it upon him.
- 29 Let him put his mouth in the dust ; if so be
there may be hope.
- 30 Let him give his cheek to him that smiteth
him ; let him be filled full with re-
proach.
- 31 For the Lord will not cast off for ever.
- 32 For though he cause grief, yet will he have
compassion according to the multitude
of his mercies.
- 33 For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve
the children of men.
- 34 To crush under foot all the prisoners of the
earth,
- 35 To turn aside the right of a man before the
face of the Most High,
- 36 To subvert a man in his cause, the Lord ap-
proveth not.
- 37 Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass,
when the Lord commandeth it not ?
- 38 Out of the mouth of the Most High cometh
there not evil and good ?
- 39 Wherefore doth a living man complain, a
man for the punishment of his sins ?
- 40 Let us search and try our ways, and turn
again to the LORD.
- 41 Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto
God in the heavens.
- 42 We have transgressed and have rebelled ;
thou hast not pardoned.
- 43 Thou hast covered with anger and pursued
us ; thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied.
- 44 Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that
our prayer should not pass through.
- 45 Thou hast made us *as* the offscouring and
refuse in the midst of the peoples.
- 46 All our enemies have opened their mouth
wide against us.
- 47 Fear and the pit are come upon us, devasta-
tion and destruction.
- 48 Mine eye runneth down with rivers of
water, for the destruction of the daugh-
ter of my people.
- 49 Mine eye poureth down, and ceaseth not,
without any intermission,
- 50 Till the LORD look down, and behold from
heaven.
- 51 Mine eye affecteth my soul, because of all
the daughters of my city.
- 52 They have chased me sore like a bird, that
are mine enemies without cause.
- 53 They have cut off my life in the dungeon,
and have cast a stone upon me.
- 54 Waters flowed over mine head ; I said, I am
cut off.
- 55 I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the
lowest dungeon.
- 56 Thou heardest my voice ; hide not thine ear
at my breathing, at my cry.
- 57 Thou drewest near in the day that I called
upon thee : thou saidst, Fear not.
- 58 O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my
soul ; thou hast redeemed my life.
- 59 O LORD, thou hast seen my wrong ; judge
thou my cause.
- 60 Thou hast seen all their vengeance and all
their devices against me.

61 Thou hast heard their reproach, O LORD,
and all their devices against me ;
62 The lips of those that rose up against me,
and their imagination against me all the
day.
63 Behold thou their sitting down, and their
rising up ; I am their song.

64 Thou wilt render unto them a recompence,
O LORD, according to the work of their
hands.
65 Thou wilt give them hardness of heart, thy
curse unto them.
66 Thou wilt pursue them in anger, and de-
stroy them from under the heavens of
the LORD.

Chap. 3. The title of the 102d Psalm might fitly be prefixed to this chapter, "The prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and pours out his complaint before the Lord ;" for it is very feelingly and fluently that the complaint is here poured out. H.—In the interpretation of this chapter, we must assume either that Jeremiah spoke of himself, or of the people—for himself, or for the people—giving his own personal experience, or the experience of the people as a whole. I accept the former theory—viz., that Jeremiah here speaks of and for himself, giving his own personal experiences, and not specially those of the people. H. C.

1. *The man that has seen affliction has gained knowledge of some of the deepest facts of life.* We do not know life till we have felt pain. Suffering opens the eyes to the facts of life and breaks up many idle dreams. Mere show and pretence are then felt to be vain and mocking. True friends are discriminated from idle acquaintances. The value of inward things is discovered. *Adeney.*

Affliction leads some to doubt the existence of God. It is not uncommon for people to say in their hearts, what some even venture to say with their lips, "If there were a God, I should not be suffered to pass through misfortunes and sorrows so distressing and so undeserved." *Affliction leads some to doubt God's kindly interest in human beings.* Not denying the existence of Deity, these afflicted ones question His moral attributes. They ask, "If God were a Being of boundless benevolence, would He suffer us to go through waters so deep, flames so fierce? His kindness and compassion—were such attributes part of His nature—would interpose on our behalf and deliver us." *Some who believe that God permits affliction misinterpret it as a sign of His wrath.* This it may be ; this it was in the case of Jerusalem. Yet God in the midst of wrath remembers mercy ; He doth not keep His anger forever. And there are instances in which no greater misinterpretation could be possible than the view that suffering is mere penalty, that those who suffer most are necessarily sinners above all their neighbors. *Affliction should be regarded by the believer as a proof*

of Divine mercy and as meant for their good. Scripture represents suffering as the chastening of a Father's hand. The experience of many a Christian is summed up in the language of the psalmist : "It was good for me that I was afflicted." *Affliction may thus become the occasion for devout thanksgiving.* How often have mature and holy Christians been heard to say, "I would not, upon looking back, have been without the ruggedness of the road, the bitterness of the cup"! T.

7. Fenced me about. Every life is surrounded by Divine limitations. God hedges all of us about. Some have a narrow field of freedom and others a wider field. But every man's field is fenced in. Within certain limits we have scope for choice and will. Yet even there choice is fettered. For there is not only the hedge that bounds our area of action, there is the chain on our own person that hampers our movements. Free-will is far from being unlimited. Or, if the will is not fettered, the execution of it is. *Adeney.*

Sin is but another name for self-direction. We cast off the will of God in it, and set up for a way and for objects of our own. We lay off plans to serve ourselves, and we mean to carry them straight through to their result. Whatever crosses us, or turns us aside, or in any way forbids us to do or succeed just as we like, becomes our annoyance. And these kinds of annoyance are so many and subtle and various, that the very world seems to be contrived to baffle us. In one view it is. It would not do for us, having cast off the will of God, and set up our own will, to let us get on smoothly and never feel any friction or collision with the will cast off. Therefore God manages to turn us about, beat us back, empty us from vessel to vessel, and make us feel that our bad will is hedged about, after all, by His Almighty purposes. It would not answer even for the Christian, who has meant to surrender his will, and really wants to be perfected in the will of God, to be made safe in his plans and kept in a continual train of successes. He wants a reminder every hour ; some defeat, surprise, adversity, peril ; to be agitated, mortified, beaten out of

his courses, so that all remains of self-will in him may be sifted out of him. *Bushnell.*

The highest obedience is not the restraint of our will before God's will, but the assimilation of the two. We learn to will what God wills. Then we keep within the Divine limitations, and yet they cease to be limitations to us. They never touch us because we never attempt nor wish to cross them. Here lies the secret of peace as well as of holiness. *Adeney.*—Resignation to His will, waiting for His time of deliverance, confidence in His goodness—such is the attitude of heart in which true consolation and ultimate prosperity will be found. T.

9-13. We must interpret Jeremiah to say only, The Lord hath led me into paths of *sore trial*, where I found myself involved in constant reproach from my people, in more or less peril of my life, in no small suffering under imprisonment and torture, and an immense amount of heart-sorrow in benevolent labors for a people who could not be won back to penitence and to God. We ought to be very slow to interpret Jeremiah's words to mean that God seduced him into sin. H. C.

18. I have even given up all for gone, concluding, "My strength and my hope are perished from the Lord, I can no longer stay myself upon God as my support, for I do not find that He gives me encouragement to do so; nor can I look for His appearing in my behalf, so as to put an end to my troubles, for the case seems remediless, and even my God inexorable." Without doubt it was his infirmity to say thus (Ps. 77:10), for with God there is everlasting strength, and He is His people's never-failing hope, whatever they may think. H.

19-21. In his distress the sufferer cries to God, calling upon his great Helper to note his condition and remember it. Then he is calmed by prayer, and rests in the assurance that God does not forget his trouble. Recalling this thought to mind, he recovers hope. *Adeney.*

There is gall and wormwood in the transgressor's cup, but it is in the after-taste that the bitterness is perceived. With those that suffer under the loving chastisement of the Lord, the case is reversed; all the bitterness is concentrated in the suffering, the after-taste is joy and consolation; no savor of the wormwood remains; but in proportion to the bitterness of the first infliction is the delight with which he tastes and sees that the Lord is gracious, and full of compassion and loving mercy to His obedient children. No chapter in the Old Testament is more rich in comfort than

this. The character of Jeremiah is peculiarly sweet and interesting; hardly could he finish his pathetic complaints, suggested by the sorrowing recollections of which his heart was full, before the promises of Jehovah burst upon his view with the brightness of a sunbeam, and the sudden transition of his thoughts from the anguish he had suffered to the assurances the Spirit had given him of blessedness that was to last forever, is one of the most striking instances to be found in all Scripture of the efficacy of Divine grace in wiping away the tears from off the cheek of the faithful. *Anon.*

22. At this point the meditations of the prophet take a turn. He looks away from his own and his fellow-countrymen's afflictions and directs his gaze heavenward. The scene of his vision changes. No longer the calamities of Jerusalem, but the character and the purposes of the Most High absorb his attention. There is a rainbow which spans even the stormiest sky. Earth may be dark, but there is brightness above. Man may be cruel or miserable, but God has not forgotten to be gracious. T.

Let those who enjoy health and hilarity acknowledge dependence, and consider from whom the blessing comes. As there is a pride of family, of beauty, of riches, so there is a pride of health; and some of the most signal and admonitory reverses we have ever known have befallen families and individuals whose habit it was to vaunt that they owed nothing to the physician. Every day, if possible, every hour, let us give thanks that our health has had no interruption, or that it has continued long, or after illness and decay, that it has been restored. "It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, and because His compassions fail not." That balance of the faculties, mental and bodily, which causes each and all together to work to the greatest advantage, manifests itself by a natural lightness of temper and clear animation of spirits, which is most remarkable in youth, but which we sometimes observe even in the autumnal days of a beautiful old age. It is the greatest of all blessings to the body; but at the same time it is a blessing which nothing bodily has power to confer. And therefore, we must look higher. J. W. A.

It is of the Lord's mercies. Here are mercies in the plural number, denoting the abundance and variety of those mercies; God is an inexhaustible fountain of mercy, the Father of mercies. We all owe it to the sparing mercy of God that we are not consumed; others have

been consumed round about us, and we ourselves have been in the consuming, and yet we are not consumed. Had we been dealt with according to our sins, we had been consumed long ago; but we have been dealt with according to God's mercies, and we are bound to acknowledge it to His praise. Even in the depth of affliction we still have experience of the tenderness of the Divine pity, and the truth of the Divine promise. God's compassions fail not; no, not when in anger He seems to have shut up His tender mercies. These rivers of mercy run fully and constantly, but never run dry; no, they are new every morning; every morning we have fresh instances of God's compassion toward us; He visits us with them every morning. When our comforts fail, yet God's compassions do not. H.

22, 23. *The unceasing mercies of God.* It would seem, according to the best authorities, that we ought to read the first of these two verses thus: "The Lord's mercies, verily they cease not, surely His compassions fail not." Thus we are assured of the enduring character of God's mercies. How striking is this assurance, coming where it does after monstrous dirges of despair! In the Lamentations we meet with one of the richest confessions of faith in the goodness of God. The black clouds are not universal; even here there is a break, and the brightest sunlight streams through, all the more cheering for the darkness that precedes it. This is a remarkable testimony to the breadth and force of Divine grace. Surely it is a great consolation for the desponding that even the exceptional sufferer of the Lamentations sees the unceasing mercies of God! *Adeney.*

New mercies are constantly bestowed. The successive stages of our earthly pilgrimage reveal fresh wants, call for fresh supplies from the bounty and benevolence of our God and Father. With new needs come new favors. Varying duties, fresh relationships and changing circumstances are the occasion of ever-renewed manifestations of Divine goodness. And our repeated errors and infirmities are the occasion of new manifestations of Divine forbearance and forgiveness. T.

Every trusting child of God can have this prophet's comfort and this prophet's hope. The Lord's mercies are "new every morning," and he whose portion is by faith in Him who is ever saying, "Behold, I make all things new," can joy in every new morning as a New Year's morning—new in truth as well as in name. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new

creature; the old things are passed away; behold they are become new." Old sins, old sorrows, old failures, old disappointments, old weaknesses—they are all passed away; and in their stead are new opportunities, new possibilities, new hopes and new strength. Faith in Christ is in itself "newness of life;" and its possession is the possession of the Fountain of Eternal Youth. To him who would find new freshness at any other fountain, Jesus says: "Every one that drinketh of *this* water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life." This is not a mere abstraction, but a practical truth for every-day help. There are those who have found the Fountain of Eternal Youth, and whose faces glow in its freshness—"new every morning." And there are careworn faces which are growing old in hopelessness, because they will not trust, and take, the Lord's gracious provisions for their spiritual renewing. S. S. T.

24, 25. The sense of this is plain. To take God for one's portion implies the cheerful relinquishment of all good inconsistent with His service. You accept His will as your supreme law, and cheerfully forego everything that He declines to give. For better or for worse, you take Him and His work and His reward as your own, discarding all other portions, all other good. So doing, you are welcome to hope in Him. You may expect Him to deal well enough by you, and you can surely afford to be satisfied with whatever His allotments may be. The testimony of the prophet here is that the Lord will surely do well by all those who thus receive Him as their God and portion. It is safe to presume that His own experience through a life of terrible hardship testified to this great fact. H. C.

24. That God is, and ever will be, the all-sufficient happiness of His people, and they have chosen Him and depend upon Him to be such. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul. "When I have lost all I have in the world, liberty and livelihood and almost life itself, yet I have not lost my interest in God." Portions on earth are perishing things, but God is a portion forever. "While I have an interest in God, therein I have enough; I have that which is sufficient to balance all my troubles, and make up all my losses." Whatever we are robbed of, our portion is safe. "That is that which I depend upon, and rest satisfied with; therefore will I hope in Him. I will stay my-

self upon Him, and encourage myself in Him, when all other supports and encouragements fail me." It is our duty to make God the portion of our souls, and then to make use of Him as our portion, and to take the comfort of it in the midst of our lamentations. II.

A "portion," as the word is here employed, denotes whatever constitutes the stable and permanent source of our chief enjoyment, as distinguished from an occasional and transient benefit. The prophet rests in God as his portion; places on God his expectation of good; concentrates all his hopes and affections, all the sentiments of confidence and complacency on Him, and on Him alone. Other beings might administer to his relief, but God alone could supply his supreme good. *R. Hall.*

The happiness derived from the affections must arise from their exercise, and the highest conceivable happiness would arise from the perfect love of such a being as God. It is in this way only that God can become the portion of the soul; and thus He may become its infinite and only adequate portion. Let the affections rest upon a perfect being, and happiness, so far as it can be derived from them, will be complete; but when their object is not only perfect, but infinite and unchangeable, then is there provision both for perfect happiness, and for its perpetuity and augmentation forever. *M. Hopkins.*

"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." Though God alone is fit to be the portion of any of His creatures, He is not such to any, unless they choose Him. Till He is fixed upon as such, and preferred to all besides, we have no part or lot in His favor and perfection. All that choose this Divine portion first entertain such notions of His character, His administration and their own need of His favor as determine their choice of none beside. And when this choice is made, it is made with the whole heart; all the activity of the mind, all the powers of our nature, are well employed here; he that has turned to the Lord often retraces the course he has been led, often reflects with delight on the choice he has made; he never thinks of regretting it; the more experience of it he obtains, the more his satisfaction in it is confirmed; that this is his portion, his soul saith it; it never enters into his thoughts to doubt the propriety and wisdom of his choice; the consciousness of having such a portion illuminates the future, while it cheers the present. *R. Hall.*

The secret of hope. The reader of the psalms is familiar with the utterance, "The Lord is

my portion." The characteristic peculiarity of the adoption of this confession of faith by the sufferer of the Lamentations is his taking it as a ground of hope. The present is so dark that he can have little joy even in God. Earthly things are so unpropitious that he can hope little from them. But with God for his portion he can look forward from the troubles of the present and the threatenings of earthly calamities to an unearthly joy in the future. To have God for our portion is the secret of hope. *Adeney.*

When the Christian is uniting himself with God and Christ by acts of faith, by efforts of devotion, contemplation, love, the influences of peace and union with Christ are such, and so endearing, that it is some participation of the Divine happiness itself. God is His own portion, His own rest, His own centre, and the Christian derives his happiness from resting upon that eternal centre of felicity, in finding in God a fulness of good; all desires being subdued to that one desire after happiness, which is only to be found in God. The communication of those holy pleasures which spring from love, from faith, from devotion, is to have fellowship with the Divine fulness of felicity. *R. Hall.*

24-26. God and his salvation are the object of his desire. Gladly would he possess them, but if he cannot, he will make them the object of his hope, and if hope fails, he will quietly wait. There is no case so desperate, no weary disappointment so prolonged, in which there does not remain some duty toward God. This is what we have to consider. In the 24th verse this sufferer speaks of his hope in God: "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I *hope* in Him." In the 25th verse he speaks of "waiting for God." "The Lord is good unto them that *wait* for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him." And in the 26th verse he combines the two. "It is good that a man should both *hope* and *quietly wait* for the salvation of the Lord." *Ker.*

26. *It is good that a man should both hope.* Hope is essentially necessary to faith; he that *hopes not cannot believe*; if there be no *expectation*, there can be no *confidence*. When a man *hopes* for salvation, he should *wait* for it; use every means that may lead to it; for *hope* cannot live if there be no *exercise*. If *hope* become *impatient*, *faith* will be impossible—for who can believe for his salvation when his mind is *agitated*? He must therefore *quietly wait*. He must *expect*, and yet be *dumb*, as the words imply, ever feeling his *utter unworthiness*; and, without *murmuring*, struggle into life. *A. C.*

Quiet waiting. We are here first reminded that God does not disregard those who seek Him. Though His grace may be delayed, it will come in due time. Then we are told that this waiting for God's response to our prayers is for our good, provided it be patient. *That this waiting may be profitable it must be quiet.* Impatience wrecks faith and submissiveness and obedience, and all the graces that are necessary for a right reception of Divine salvation. It is difficult to be quiet while waiting. We grow restless and fret ourselves as the weary hours drag past. It is harder to wait than to work, because work occupies us as waiting does not. Yet we lose much for lack of patience. We are not quiet enough to hear the still small voice that would bring salvation. In our patience we must possess our souls if we are to receive into them the richest gifts of the goodness of God. *Adeney.*

What is wanted is that we should put all our highest interests in the hand of God, and then go quietly about our daily opportunities of serving Him. When the passenger goes on board ship at the beginning of a long voyage he puts complete confidence in the captain, and thus he hopes and quietly waits for the voyage to come to an end. Through all perils of the sea he can only hope and quietly wait, knowing that the master of the vessel is the only one who can guard against the perils. And so in the voyage of life; we cannot shorten it, we cannot determine what its circumstances will be; but we can put ourselves in the hands of the great Guide. He will look after our safety, if we only take heed to our part in the doing of His work. *Y.*

We must cultivate patience by a *calm attention to duties.* Quiet waiting is not inaction. We may be waiting for one object, while we are steadily working for another. If some aim that engrossed our life is withdrawn, and some way of usefulness that had all our affection is closed, we shall find there are other roads to walk in, and other works to perform, provided the heart will accept them. Even though the heart shrinks, if the hand will only give itself to what it finds to do, and will do it with its might, the heart will follow. It is a kind law of our nature, that labor expended on any object gives an interest in it; and it is a still kinder law of the kingdom of God, that the tamest and most insignificant of daily duties may be made noble and divine, when the thought of God and the will of Christ are carried into them. One soul may rise to heroism in the narrowest circle of routine, when another

dwindles upon the grandest fields of action. Thus the means are at our disposal for building up these virtues of hope and patience in our character. When we give our souls up in trust to God, He gives them back to us again with His hand on them, that we may labor to fill them with all that can make them happy in the future and strong in the present.

We shall find increasingly "how good it is." It is good now *in the depth of the soul*, in the conscious assurance that it is better to rest in the hardest of God's ways than to wander at will in our own. "Behold, we count them happy who endure." We shall find it good in the growth of all the Christian graces, under the shadow of patience. Were we to gain every blessing so soon as sought, the blessing itself would be small, and we should gain nothing more. But now, while we patiently wait, faith becomes stronger, resignation sinks into a deeper attitude of reverence, gentleness and meekness are clothed with softer beauty, and courage and fortitude, and all the stronger powers of the soul, arouse themselves and put on armor "to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." *Ker.*

Hope and quietly wait. Contentment does not come of one's possessions or of one's position, but it comes of one's way of looking at these. He who realizes that he is where God wants him to be, and that he has what God wants him to have, will be contented with his lot and his store, whatever they are; but he who fails to realize this truth would never be contented, though he were the most favored man in all the world. *S. S. T.*—They that deserves nothing should be satisfied with anything; bless God for what you have, and trust God for what you want; if we cannot bring our condition to our mind, we must bring our mind to our condition; if a man is not content in the state he is in, he will not be content in the state he would be in. *Ersine Mason.*—The fountain of content must spring up in the mind, and he who has so little knowledge of human nature as to seek happiness by changing anything but his own disposition will waste his life in fruitless efforts and multiply the griefs which he proposes to remove. *Anon.*

Discontent is a miserable fault. It grieves God, for it springs from a want of faith in Him. It destroys one's own heart-peace; discontented people are always unhappy. It disfigures beauty of character. It sours the temper, ruffles the calm of sweet life, and tarnishes the loveliness of the spirit. It even works out through the flesh, and spoils the beauty of the

fairest face. To have a transfigured face, one must have heaven in one's heart. Just in proportion as the lesson is learned are the features brightened by the outshining of the indwelling peace. Besides all this, discontent casts shadows on the lives of others. One discontented person in a family often makes a whole household wretched. If not for our own sake, then, we ought at least for the sake of our friends to learn to be contented. We have no right to cast shadows on other lives.

But how can we learn contentment? One step toward it is patient submission to unavoidable ills and hardships. No earthly lot is perfect. No mortal ever yet in this world found a set of circumstances without some drawback. Sometimes it lies in our power to remove the discomfort. Much of our hardship is of our own making. Much of it would require but a little energy on our own part to cure. We surely are very foolish if we live on amid ills and frets, day after day, which we might change for comforts if we would. All removable troubles we ought, therefore, to remove. But there are trials which we cannot change into pleasures, burdens which we cannot lay off, crosses which we must continue to carry, "thorns in the flesh" which must remain with their rankling. When we have such trials, why should we not sweetly accept them as part of God's best way with us? Discontent never made a rough path smoother, a heavy burden lighter, a bitter cup less bitter, a dark way brighter, a sorrow less sore. It only makes matters worse. One who accepts with patience what he cannot change has learned the secret of victorious living. *J. R. Miller.*

I do not know that I can better mark out the limits of Christian contentment than in these words. The ills which we cannot cure we must bear, with Christian patience and resignation; and they are thus converted into blessings. But with anything in us, around us, or in the world, which is wrong, imperfect, unsatisfying, when it might be made better, there is a glorious discontent whose goadings should urge us to action. This noble discontent with the present is the great lever that moves the world. It has impelled man's progress in the arts and sciences, and social life, in government, in civilization; it has added its stimulus to the pious zeal of evangelists and missionaries in carrying the glad tidings around the whole earth. Like Cæsar, it deems nothing done so long as anything remains to be done; like Paul, forgetting the things that are behind, it is always stretching forward to the

things that are before. Let us cherish this discontent, this unwillingness to acquiesce in any evil which we can possibly remedy; and let us not be content with the absence of any good, unless it is impossible to attain it, or its attainment will interfere with other ends which our duties to God and our fellow-men make even more desirable. *T. Chase.*

27. In this matter of taking the yoke in one's youth, Jeremiah doubtless spoke from his own experience. He is supposed to have been not far from twenty years of age when the Lord put this heavy yoke of his prophetic mission upon his neck. (See Jer. 1.) He gave him then to understand that it would be a life of stern self-denial, of bitter opposition, and of great trial. *H. C.*

That he bear the yoke in his youth. Early habits, when good, are invaluable. Early discipline is equally so. He who has not got under wholesome restraint in youth will never make a useful man, a good man, nor a happy man. *A. C.*—*The discipline experienced in youth fits for the toil and suffering of after life.* This is why it is "good" then to endure it. Many of the noblest characters have known trouble in early life, and have thus learned the wholesome lessons of adversity which have stood them in good stead in after years. They who are afflicted in their youth learn the limitation of their own powers, learn the inexorable necessities of human life, and become apt scholars in the great school of Divine providence. *T.*

Here it seems to be meant of the yoke of affliction; many have found it good to bear this in youth, it has made them humble and serious, and has weaned them from the world who otherwise would have been proud and unruly and as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. But when do we bear the yoke so that it is really good for us to bear it in our youth? He answers in the following verses: 1. When we are quiet under our afflictions; when we sit alone and keep silence, that we may converse with God and commune with our own hearts, silencing all discontented, distrustful thoughts, and laying our hand upon our mouth, as Aaron, who under a very severe trial held his peace. We must keep silence under the yoke, as those that have borne it upon us, not wilfully pulled it upon our own necks, but patiently submitted to it when God laid it upon us. When those who are afflicted in their youth accommodate themselves to their afflictions and study to answer God's end in afflicting them, then they will find it good for them to

bear it, for it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are thus exercised thereby. 2. When we are humble and patient under our affliction; he gets good by the yoke who puts his mouth in the dust in token of sorrow and shame at the remembrance of sin. H.

28. Alone. The God of our lives puts into all of them some solitude, for a purpose of His own. Nothing else would do as well. He arranges it for us that we cannot be always in anybody's company. He keeps curtains about us, and drops them very often. Friend after friend departs. Something happens that tells you there is a space of mutual misunderstanding or want of understanding between you and the nearest and dearest heart on earth. There is a night between every two days. He ordains sickness, and shuts us in chambers, and sends us on journeys, and beckons away from us all our companions. Is it not plain that this is because the deepest and holiest exercises of the Spirit are where no human presence is by? Before the Spirit has done His deepest and best work in you He will have you all to Himself. The question of everlasting love is a private question: Wilt thou be Mine forever? The bridegroom must stand at your heart's door when no human form, or face, or voice, can come in between you and Him. Each succeeding struggle, when we get the better of a besetting sin, when we wrestle with a fierce tempter and finally cast him behind us, when we make the terrible sacrifice which carries us clear of some entangling alliance or corrupting but fascinating acquaintance and sets our feet on a rock, or when God Himself puts out His hand and cleanses us by some unsought suffering, is solitary work. F. D. H.

Silence. Looking round on the noisy inanity of the world, words with little meaning, actions with little worth, one loves to reflect on the great empire of silence. The noble silent men, scattered here and there each in his department, silently thinking, silently working, of whom no mention is made. *Carlyle*.

30. The prophet, profiting by his own experience and by that of his countrymen, admonishes all to meekness and submission. In resistance is neither peace nor deliverance; in patient subjection and waiting is true wisdom, for such is the way to contentment and to final salvation. T.

31-33. The Lord will not cast off forever His real friends, those who humbly trust in Him. He may sometimes smite them sorely in chastisement for their sins, or, as in the case of Jeremiah, may lay heavy burdens upon them, be-

cause he has hard work to be done; but He will surely have compassion in accordance with the multitude of His mercies. Verse 33 expresses its thought beautifully: "God doth not afflict from His heart." H. C.

God's good purposes in causing pain. All this is the language of hope, and continues naturally what is said in verses 21 and 24. The existence of present trouble presses upon the heart, but along with it there is the confident assurance of future deliverance. God casts men off, as it were, that they may realize their weakness and true state, and then, when they make the full discovery, God's hand is stretched out to restore. Y.—God does "cast off" and "cause grief." His love does not nullify His wrath. When grieved and disowned by God the soul feels utterly desolate. But the terrible judgment is only for a season. It will end in reconciliation and compassion. This great truth gives an entirely new complexion to our views of life and providence. We see at times the severe side. But we misjudge if we take that as a sample of the whole. Indeed, the very severity prepares the way for mercy; for God can show compassion after chastisement to a degree that would not be good before the wholesome discipline. *Adeney*.

"God does not willingly afflict the children of men;" He seems to share in the suffering while He inflicts it, and to feel the very pain of His own blows, while they fall heavy upon the poor sinner. Judgment is called God's "strange work;" a work that He has no proneness to, nor finds any complacency in; and therefore, whensoever He betakes Himself to it, we may be confident that it is not for the sake of the work itself, but that He has some secret, overruling design of love, which He is to compass after an unusual, extraordinary way. He never lops and prunes us with His judgments because He delights to see us bare, and poor, and naked, but because He would make us fruitful; nor would He cause us to pass through the fiery furnace, but to purge and to refine us. For can it be any satisfaction to a father to employ a surgeon to cut off his child's arm, were not the taking away a part found necessary to secure the whole? Common humanity never uses the lance to pain and torture, but to restore the patient. But now, the care and tenderness of an earthly parent or physician is but a faint shadow and resemblance of that infinite compassion and affection which God bears to His children, even in the midst of His severest usage of them. *South*.

Evil and suffering are all around us, but it is

a part of our faith in the fatherliness of God to believe that "He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men;" and to say with the psalmist, "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." The universe is in the interests of comfort and happiness and joy. Everything is contrived to bend toward a blessing; God started man in Paradise; as good a Paradise as he could bear and a good deal better; and all that lies after Paradise is preparation for a Paradise improved. The Paradise regained is not the Paradise that was lost. God does not willingly afflict. There is no sorrow that has not lodged in it the possible seed-kernel of fruition. Faith in the fatherliness of God involves all this. When we experience vexation and tribulation we must always bethink ourselves of the issue to which in our Christian faith we are sure it is divinely designed to conduct. C. H. P.

Thy Heavenly Father sometimes hides His face from thee, and withdraws His quickening and refreshing presence for a time, not for want of love, for He loves thee freely; He loves thee with an everlasting love; He loves thee with the very same love with which He loves Jesus Christ; and that dear Son of His loves thee with the same love His Father loves Him; but to put more heat and life in thine affections toward Him and heavenly things; to cause thee to relish communion with Jesus Christ, when thou enjoyest it, more sweetly; to preserve it more carefully, to joy in it more thankfully, and to shun more watchfully whatsoever might rob thee of it; to stir up all the powers of thy soul, and all the graces of God in thee, to seek His face and favor again with more extraordinary and universal seriousness and industry. For we find with pleasure, possess with singular contentment, and keep with special care what we have sought with pain. Seeming desertions then and delays of this nature are fruits of thy Heavenly Father's love, and ought to be no discouragements to thee at all, holding thy integrity. *Bolton, 1631.*

God never dispenses any event to us, so much with intent to exercise His power over us, as to express His goodness toward us; He never "doth afflict or grieve" us more against our will than against His own desire; never indeed but when goodness itself calleth for it, and even mercy doth urge thereto. *Isaac Barrow.*—Omnipotence cannot do an unloving thing toward a believer. Oh, rest quite sure, Christian, a hard thing, an unloving thing from God toward one of His own people is

quite impossible! The only question is, Art thou His child? If so, He hath rebuked thee in affection, and there is love in His chastisement. *Spurgeon.*—Take all afflictions as tokens of God's love to thee and trials of thy love to Him, and purposes of kindness to enrich thee, and increase more plentifully in thee His blessed gifts and spiritual graces, if thou persevere faithfully unto the end. *Leighton.*

Consider your affliction as a mark of your relation to the Father of your spirits; a proof of His love and care; of His preparing you for His kingdom! He is melting you in the furnace, that you may bear His image. He values you too much not to bestow pains upon you. This is the mysterious process by which He is conducting you to heaven, and training you for its enjoyment. Be not, then, overmuch cast down! Remember the immutability of His promises; the stability of His covenant; the perpetuity of His love! "Remember the years of the right hand of the Most High!" Let those who have been afflicted seriously consider what has been the effect of their trials upon themselves. If no effect has been produced, what can they expect but "sorrow upon sorrow"? What but greater severity, since the former chastening has failed of its purpose? It is a fearful thing to have come out of the furnace hardened! to have produced none of those "fruits of righteousness," for the production of which the chastening was sent! Consider that unsanctified affliction can only be succeeded either by final impenitence or by greater affliction, in order to our recovery. Let us be anxious that, being made, by our trials, more patient, more spiritual, we may be found, as gold tried and purified, to praise and honor, at the appearing of Jesus Christ! *R. Hall.*

Suffering is intended to prepare and make room in our hearts for the grace of Christ, because the tendency of the human heart, if left to itself, is to pride and self-dependence; and if suffered to work our own way, we will almost inevitably make shipwreck of our souls. He who has infinite wisdom knows what ballast of suffering we want, as well as what fair wind to swell our sails; and His love will undertake both for the one and the other, and so temper them together, that we may not be stranded on the heavy sands of adversity, nor be drawn off out of our reckoning by too strong a gale of apparent prosperity. Let us adore our heavenly Father for His merciful and wise dispensations, and pray with sincerity of heart that He will neither give us those possessions

which would in any wise draw our hearts aside from Him, nor take away that suffering which is designed to drive us to Him, until it has wrought this effect, nor suffer our ears to get heavy or dull under His teachings. That is a striking word of Jeremiah, true, alas! of very many, "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, and thou saidst, I will not hear." How often is it so, a man's ear wanton and ungoverned, or quite deaf to expostulation and to the voice even of God, and the heart obdurate as marble, till the deaf ear is pierced, and the hard heart made tender by suffering! *Anon.*

Trial brings man face to face with God—God and he touch; and the flimsy veil of bright cloud that hung between him and the sky is blown away; he feels that he is standing outside the earth, with nothing between him and the Eternal Infinite. Oh, there is something in the sick-bed, and the aching heart, and the restlessness and the languor of shattered health, and the sorrow of affections withered, and the stream of life poisoned at its fountain, and the cold, lonely feeling of utter rawness of heart which is felt when God strikes home in earnest, that forces a man to feel what is real and what is not. F. W. R.

The thought that God is training us for a wider sphere than this life affords is both ennobling to character and helpful in serving Him while upon the earth. We are at present absent from home. The classes for spiritual instruction are now being formed for our sakes; each soul is being called to his definite and appropriate place. The keenest, sharpest discipline God may find necessary in some cases. A prolonged stay in primary principles He may see to be the only way toward advancement. Even a seeming withdrawal of His favor may be the Divine way of dealing with some of us. He is our Teacher. His eye is fixed upon our spiritual growth. His providential arrangements are adjusted to our individual need. He is striving to lead us up to graduation into a perfect life, the chief characteristic of which shall be perfect readiness for service through endless ages. That we know so little of what that service shall be is only an evidence that its scope will surpass the limits of our present capacities. That will be the employment of perfected natures—an employment for which the school of this life is preparing us. *Anon.*

Suffering subverses our sanctification, as it is a necessary means of self-knowledge, as it leads to self-conquest and promotes the growth of the Christian graces, as through self-knowl-

edge it imparts the knowledge of duty to others, and as through self-conquest it prompts to and strengthens for the actual discharge of this duty. Thus we see that God's discipline is wholly for "*our profit.*" Our heavenly Father chastens, not for His pleasure, but "*that we may be partakers of His holiness.*" B.

34-36. The form of this Hebrew sentence makes it entirely clear that these three verses are to be constructed together thus: God does not look with favor on these things—viz., crushing under foot the prisoner; subverting a man's inherent rights before God; defeating his rightful cause. H. C.—In these verses certain acts of tyranny, malice and injustice are specified, which men often indulge themselves in the practice of, one toward another, but which the Divine goodness is far from countenancing or approving by any similar conduct. *Bayney.*

38. *Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good?* Do not calamities come from God's will and disposal, as well as prosperity? (See Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6.) *W. Lowth.*—It is not sin, but suffering, that is referred to, as the context clearly shows. We have just been told that God will not cast off forever because He does not afflict from His heart. We are now reminded that it is not the less true that God sends adverse as well as pleasant things. *Adeney.*

There is here an assertion of universal and particular providence. The inequality of the human lot has ever been the theme of meditation, inquiry and study. It has been attributed to chance, to men themselves, to the operation of law. But the enlightened and religious mind recognizes the voice and the hand of the Most High in human society, even when the immediate causes of what takes place are apparent. Nothing is so vast as to be above, and nothing is so minute as to be beneath, Providence. The afflictions and sufferings of life, as well as its joys and prosperity, are all allowed and all overruled for good to God's people. And all may become means of grace and blessing to such as receive them in a teachable and submissive spirit. T.

Upon this theme of universal and intense interest a word of caution calls for suggestion. It is that very much of human suffering is the necessary result of purely natural causes, and is produced solely by man's own wilful or negligent infringement of fixed and known physical laws. To alter existing natural laws for every such infringement would be not only to work by perpetual miracle, but it would be to

stop the complicated machinery of Nature, to reverse the whole movement of her admirable system and involve it in ceaseless changes and utter planless confusion and instability. And yet, notwithstanding this most obvious truth, it is a strange fact that the mass of objections to the doctrine of Providence and the loudest murmurings and complaints uttered against it relate to these very cases—to suffering induced simply by the ignorant or deliberate disregard, the voluntary infraction of physical laws. B.

39. *Wherefore doth a living man complain.* How great soever his affliction may be, he is still *alive*; therefore he may seek and find mercy unto eternal life. Of this *death* would deprive him; let not, therefore, a *living* man complain. A. C.—If we consider God's afflictions as a just reward of our evil deeds, this will prevent all murmuring and repining against Providence; especially as long as men are on this side of the grave, they ought to be thankful for having an opportunity given them for repentance. W. Louth.

Why murmur? The world is full of complaints and murmuring. It sometimes is observable that those whose lot is peculiarly fortunate, whose circumstances are peculiarly favorable, are foremost in complaint when anything occurs to them which does not fall in with their expectations, which does not correspond with their desires. On the other hand, we now and again meet with the poor, the suffering, the friendless, who display a cheerful, uncomplaining disposition. T.

Murmuring is a species of blasphemy. You are in the Lord's guest chamber. You sit at His table. If you complain of the fare, you insult Him on whose bounty you live. If you doubt whether you will be taken care of, you impugn the truthfulness of Him who declares that He is more willing to give good things to them that ask Him than parents are to give bread to their children. If we had eyes and hearts of faith, we would see that whatever He gives is best for us. Anon.

Sin is the cause of every other source of complaint on earth; were there no sin, there would be no sorrow. This holds good of the pain which comes directly from above, but not less of the pain which others procure for us—nay, even of that for which we have only ourselves to blame; not a suffering is to be named which stands entirely without connection with sin, by whomsoever perpetrated. Wherefore, then, does a living man complain, who through his sins has merited more than the worst of his sufferings, and has long since forfeited the en-

joyments of his lot? Let us rather appear as our own accusers, than dare to criticise the ways and the work of a holy God! Thou, who so long and loudly complainest over an infinite number of things here below, complain above all of thine own sins, which have produced so much sorrow, and have closed to thee the only source of consolation. Van O.

The woes of broken health and grim depression; the pains, the unspeakable agonies by which human bodies are wrenched for whole years; the wrongs of orphanage; pestilence, fire, flood, tempest and famine—how can a good God launch His bolts on men, we ask, in severities like these? And the sufferers themselves sometimes wonder, even in their faith, how it is that if God is a father, He can let fall on His children such hail-storms of inevitable, unmitigated disaster. No, suffering mortal! a truce to all such complainings. These are only God's merciful indirections, fomentations of trouble and sorrow, that He is applying to soften the rugged and hard will in you. These pains are only switches to turn you off from the track of His coming retributions. If your great, proud nature could be won to the real greatness of character by a tenderer treatment, do you not see, from all God's gentle methods of dealing with mankind, that He gladly would soften your troubles? And if diamonds are not polished by soap, or oil, or even by any other stone, but only by their own fine dust, why should you complain that God is tempering you to your good only by such throes and lacerations and wastings of life as are necessary? Bushnell.

We cannot be useless while we are doing and suffering God's will, whatever it may be found to be. And we can always do that. If we are bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, we are not useless. And we can always do that. If we are increasing in the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, we are not useless. And we can always do that. While we pray we cannot be useless. And we can always do that. God will always find us a work to do, a niche to fill, a place to serve, nay, even a soul to save, when it is His will, and not ours, that we desire to do; and if it should please Him that we should sit still for the rest of our lives, doing nothing else but waiting on Him, and waiting for Him, why should we complain? "Here is the faith and patience of the saints." Bp. Thorold.

40-42. At this point it was exceedingly appropriate that the prophet should change his strain of discourse to the plural, should include

the people with himself, and so exhort both them and himself to most thorough, self-searching repentance, prayer and confession. The last clause was painfully true; the sins of the people had reached a depth of depravity that God could not pardon. H. C.

40. How are we to get the pardon of our sins? The prophet tells us: Let us examine ourselves. *Let us turn again to the Lord. Let us lift up our heart*; let us make fervent prayer and supplication for mercy. *Let us lift up our hand*; let us solemnly promise to be His, and bind ourselves in a covenant to be the Lord's only; so much *lifting up the hand to God* implies. *We have transgressed*; let our confession of sin be fervent and sincere. And to us who profess *Christianity* it may be added, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ* as having *died for thee*; and thou shalt not perish, but have everlasting life. A. C.

Self-introspection may easily, and will certainly, become morbid, if it be not checked by a constant outlooking of the mind. True religion is all comprised in two precepts, "Look into yourself to see your own vileness, Look out of yourself to Christ." Little enough health, comfort, peace and satisfaction shall we derive from the first of these precepts, unless we constantly couple with it the second. The knowledge and consciousness of guilt is only valuable as a background, on which to paint more vividly to the mind's eye the rainbow colors of the love of Jesus. Walk abroad ever and anon, and expatiate freely in the sunlight of God's grace and love in Christ. Breathe it, bask in it, walk in it, there is no other mode of really invigorating the spiritual system. A religion, if it is to be strong, must be joyous; and joyous it cannot be without the light of God's love in Christ shining freely into every corner of the soul. *Goulburn*.—Two things our afflictions should put us upon. 1. A serious consideration of ourselves, and a reflection upon our lives past. Let us try our ways, that by them we may try ourselves, for we are to judge of our state not by our faint wishes, but by our steps; not by one particular step, but by our ways; the ends we aim at, the rules we go by, and the agreeableness of the temper of our minds and the tenor of our lives to those ends and those rules. 2. A sincere conversion to God; "Let us turn again to the Lord, to Him who is turned against us, and whom we have turned from; to Him let us turn by repentance and reformation, as to our owner and ruler; we have been with Him, and it has never been well with us since we forsook Him,

let us therefore now turn again to Him." This must accompany the former, and be the fruit of it; therefore we most search and try our ways, that we may turn from the evil of them to God; this was the method David took (Ps. 119: 59), "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies." H.

Times of affliction are special times of confession and repentance. Usually in prosperity men will not be at leisure to search their hearts and take notice of their sins. Therefore the Lord draweth them to confession by drawing them from the world, by laying them upon sick beds, or by bringing them into straits. *Caryl*.

41. Our hearts must go along with our prayers; we must lift up our hearts with our hands, as we must pour out our souls with our words. It is the heart that God looks at in that and every other service; for what will a sacrifice without a heart avail? If inward impressions be not in some measure answerable to outward expressions, we do but mock God and deceive ourselves. Praying is lifting up the soul to God (Ps. 25: 1), as to our Father in heaven; and the soul that hopes to be with God in heaven forever will thus, by frequent acts of devotion, be still learning the way thither, and pressing forward in that way. H.

"Drawing nigh to God" is the most comprehensive expression to describe the soul's attitude toward God. Prayer is the culminating point of this attitude. If we rightly view prayer, it embraces our whole life, our thought and feeling, our will and work, our conflict and rest. "Drawing nigh to God" describes the character of the Christian's life. In the meditation of our hearts, in the desires of our soul, in the activities and enjoyments of our daily path, we approach God; for we wish to live before Him, conscious of His presence, in constant dependence and in constant enjoyment of His grace. And all Divine revelations encourage us to draw nigh to God. They disclose the abundant mercy, the overflowing riches, the infinite love, awaiting us when we draw nigh; the atmosphere of free and all-sufficient grace which we breathe when we approach the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Saphir*.—Prayer has just two limits: the first is, that its range is confined to the promises; but within these, what a bank of wealth, what a mine of mercies, what a store of blessings! The second is, that God will grant or deny our requests as is best for His glory and our good. He makes His answers to correspond with our wants rather than to our wishes. *Guthrie*.

42, 44, 49, 50. When the believer's re-

pentings are kindled, when he knows how evil and bitter a thing it is to forsake the Lord, and to depart from His fear, and when he considers how long God has borne with him, how many favors he has received, and how brutish has been his ingratitude, his heart is broken, his tears flow, he seeks the lowest place in the dust of abasement, wonders that affliction has not long since overtaken him for his carelessness and neglect, and bows down before the Lord without a murmur. At such a time the language of the afflicted soul will be: "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens. We have transgressed and have rebelled; thou hast not pardoned. Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through. Mine eye trickleth down and ceaseth not, without any intermission, till the Lord look down and behold from heaven." J. W. A.

43, 44. What can be more dreadful than this! To have all hearing of our prayer shut off; clouds enveloping our great Father's throne which no prayer of ours can pierce through! To our joy let us remember that this can never be, save because of our great sins, and that then deep and true repentance scatters this cloud away. H. C.

44. So long as we are praying, rebelliously demanding our own way and not submitting to God's will, no prayer of ours can reach His throne in heaven. We may dare to lay our wish before God in humility, but yet in frank expression of it. Nevertheless, it can only be entertained by God when we add in spirit, if not in words, "Not my will, but Thine, be done." Thus may we cry to the void and have back only the mocking echo of our foolish prayer. We may send urgent requests toward heaven, and they will only lose themselves in the thick, black clouds of Divine disfavor which come between us and God. It is hopeful, however, for a soul to know this. When we see the cloud we are half-way toward the removal of it. *Adeney.*

48-51. In these points the prophet could not unite the people with himself, and say "Our eyes," etc. But of himself he could truly say it. He had said before, "O that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night," etc. (Jer. 9:1). The strong expression, "rivers of waters," for intense weeping, is altogether Oriental. (See Jer. 9:18; Ps. 119:136.) In

verse 51, the prophet means, "Mine eye saddens my heart;" my tears, instead of affording relief, seem only to make my sorrows the more poignant. The weeping prophet felt that he could not cease to weep until the Lord should look down propitiously and mercifully from heaven, and reverse the sore calamities of His people. This was the great burden of his prayer and of his heart. H. C.

51. *The eye and the life.* "Mine eye affecteth mine heart." More correctly, "Mine eye paineth my soul, or my life"—that is, what I see, so melancholy is it, that it preys on my mind and undermines my health. What we get from the exercise of our senses will depend upon what we bring. The prophet saw desolation all around him where once there had been crowded and prosperous life. What could he do but feel as if a broken heart would be the end of his thoughts? But the spoilers would look at the scene differently, for to them it was the place of enrichment and triumph. Y.

55-66. We may observe throughout this chapter a struggle in the prophet's breast between sense and faith, fear and hope; he complains and then comforts himself, yet drops his comforts and returns again to his complaints, as Ps. 42. But as there, so here, faith gets the last word, and comes off a conqueror, for in these verses he concludes with some comfort. H.

55-57. Here are the thoughts of his heart and the fearful trials he passed through when cast repeatedly into prison and sometimes subjected to torture. "They have cut off my life in the dungeon," does not state an actual fact, but probably the *purpose and aim* of his enemies. Twice they had thrust him into a dungeon under ground—viz., once in the prison of Jonathan the scribe (37:15, 16, 20), which was a dungeon with its underground cells, of which the prophet said to the king, "Do not send me back lest I die there;" and again in the dungeon of Malchiah, where he "sunk in the mire" (38:6), and whence the good Ebed-melech saved him. From this terrible darkness and mire he lifted up his imploring cry to his God and received the joyous reply, "Fear not." The Lord did not close His ear to the outbreaking of his agony of prayer. He never does! When His real children have cried unto Him from the depth of their distress, was it ever known that He shut His ear against their breathing and their cry? H. C.—The prophet testifies that his cry had not been unheeded. Even when immured in a pit so deep

that his voice could not reach his fellow-men, his entreaty had reached the ear and roused the pity of the eternal Lord. And He who had heard had answered too, and had sent His messenger to deliver His servant. Where is there a child of God who has not experienced the compassionate interposition of the Most High? T.

58-62. As between himself and his virulent, cruel and wicked persecutors, the Lord had fully interposed, vindicating and avenging His faithful servant and confounding his enemies. H. C.

60, 61. *Jeremiah's belief that God's eye was upon these enemies.* "Thou hast seen." It is a great matter to feel that God has His eye upon all human wickedness. We may suffer greatly from it, and yet see only a very small part of what He sees. We are forever running into extremes, exaggerating or palliating, magnifying the reality or else diminishing it. We look at things too much in reference to our individual selves, and as they concern us. But God sees things as they truly are, in all their relations and possibilities. Some things are worse than we think them, others better. And so we are enabled to feel that all wickedness is kept within comparatively innocuous limits. The mischief only reaches the outside of what is attacked, for the same God who watches the wicked watches the good at the same time. Y.

63-66. This passage must be expounded in the same way with various other passages in

the Psalms which breathe similar imprecations. The pious heart reaches essentially the same standpoint of view which God has when He dooms incorrigible sinners to destruction. Both alike look upon the wicked as hopelessly incorrigible—past the moral possibility of being reclaimed to repentance. Both alike feel the resistless demands of justice, and can, in fact, say nothing less than this: Let justice take its course! Let the great interests of a moral universe be saved and not sacrificed. H. C.

We have to distinguish between the prophet taken out of himself by inspiration and the man of like passions with ourselves, who has to pass through a long discipline before he can pray as he ought to pray. We may feel here that a silent waiting upon God would have been better than any imprecations of vengeance, and yet, at the same time, we must acquit Jeremiah of anything like personal malice. He wished that the wicked might be recompensed *according* to the work of their hands. The wicked wished Jeremiah to be treated according to the ferocity of their own hearts. Y.

The purpose for which retribution is implored. Not for the gratification of vindictive feelings. Not for the exaltation of the oppressed at the expense of the oppressor. But for the speedy deliverance of God's wronged and harassed people. For the advancement of God's cause upon earth. For the honor of God's glorious name. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" T.

LAMENTATIONS, CHAPTER IV.

4:1 How is the gold become dim! *how* is the most pure gold changed!

The stones of the sanctuary are poured out at the top of every street.

2 The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold,

How are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!

3 Even the jackals draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones:

The daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.

4 The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst:

The young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them.

5 They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets:

They that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills.

6 For the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the sin of Sodom,

That was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands were laid upon her.

7 Her nobles were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk,

They were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was as of sapphire:

- 8 Their visage is blacker than a coal ; they
are not known in the streets ;
Their skin cleaveth to their bones ; it is
withered, it is become like a stick.
- 9 They that be slain with the sword are better
than they that be slain with hunger ;
For these pine away, stricken through, for
want of the fruits of the field.
- 10 The hands of the pitiful women have sodden
their own children ;
They were their meat in the destruction of
the daughter of my people.
- 11 The LORD hath accomplished his fury, he
hath poured out his fierce anger ;
And he hath kindled a fire in Zion, which
hath devoured the foundations thereof.
- 12 The kings of the earth believed not, neither
all the inhabitants of the world,
That the adversary and the enemy should
enter into the gates of Jerusalem.
- 13 *It is* because of the sins of her prophets, *and*
the iniquities of her priests,
That have shed the blood of the just in the
midst of her.
- 14 They wander as blind men in the streets,
they are polluted with blood,
So that men cannot touch their garments.
- 15 Depart ye, they cried unto them, Unclean !
depart, depart, touch not :
When they fled away and wandered, men
said among the nations, They shall no
more sojourn *here*.
- 16 The anger of the LORD hath divided them ;
he will no more regard them :
They respected not the persons of the priests,
they favoured not the elders.
- 17 Our eyes do yet fail *in looking* for our vain
help :
In our watching we have watched for a na-
tion that could not save.
- 18 They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in
our streets :
Our end is near, our days are fulfilled ; for
our end is come.
- 19 Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles
of the heaven :
They chased us upon the mountains, they
laid wait for us in the wilderness.
- 20 The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of
the LORD, was taken in their pits ;
Of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall
live among the nations.
- 21 Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom,
that dwellest in the land of Uz :
The cup shall pass through unto thee also ;
thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make
thyself naked.
- 22 The punishment of thine iniquity is accom-
plished, O daughter of Zion ;
He will no more carry thee away into cap-
tivity :
He will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of
Edom ;
He will discover thy sins.

Chap. 4. This chapter resumes the strain of a funeral elegy from the close of chap. 2. The prophet bewails the calamities which have fallen on Jerusalem as a whole, on her infant children and on her guilty princes and leading men. H. C.

1-12. The elegy in this chapter begins with a lamentation of the sad change which the judgments of God had made in Jerusalem. The city that had been as gold, as the most fine gold, so rich and splendid, the perfection of beauty, and the joy of the whole earth, is become dim, and is changed, has lost its lustre, lost its value, is not what it was, it is become dross. The Temple is laid waste, which was the glory of Jerusalem and its protection ; it is given up into the hands of the enemy. The stones of the sanctuary, which were curiously wrought, were thrown down by the Chaldeans when they demolished it or were brought down by the force of the fire, and were poured out and thrown about in the top of every street, they lay mingled without distinction among

the common ruins. When the God of the sanctuary was by sin provoked to withdraw, no wonder that the stones of the sanctuary were thus profaned. H.

1, 2. In the first clause I understand the word "gold" to represent, not the literal and identical gold which was yet in the Temple at its fall, nor the chief men in either civil or religious stations, but in general the glory and beauty of Zion. What was exceedingly beautiful and glorious has now faded and lost its splendor. The precious "stones of the sanctuary" are probably its building stones ; tenderly sacred in the eyes of God's people, now thrown about rudely anywhere ! "The precious sons of Zion," including probably both priests and princes who would naturally be compared to fine gold, how are they now only "as earthen pitchers," vile wares ! H. C.

1. *How is the gold become dim !* How is the glory of the Temple obscured ! The sanctuary now lies in ruins ! And the stones of it are not distinguished from the common rubbish !

In like manner the priests and Levites who attended upon the service of God, and the elders of the people, the members of the great Sanhedrim who kept their court within the precincts of the Temple, these persons, that might be resembled to the pillars or corner-stones of that sacred building, are now involved in the same common destruction with the meanest of the people. (See verse 16.) *W. Lowth.*

2. "*Precious sons . . . fine gold,*" . . . become "*earthen pitchers.*" The prophet's appreciation of the proper dignity and value of his nation was naturally very exalted; in proportion were his sorrows and humiliation when his country rebelled against the Lord, and became, in consequence, a prey to the despised and hated foreigner. The reflections are applicable, not to Judah only, but to all the sinful and rebellious among men; for there is no escape from the action of the moral law, from the chastisement of the righteous Judge. *The true value and proper dignity of man.* Comparable to "fine gold" in beauty, preciousness and use is our humanity when in the state designed by the Creator, free from the corroding rust of sin, and minted and stamped with the image and superscription of the Most High. *Sin involves chastisement, and chastisement brings disgrace.* The striking contrast between gold, fine and solid, on the one hand, and "earthen pitchers" on the other hand, is a pictorial and effective representation of the change which took place in Judah. A holy nation, a kingdom of priests, the chosen of the Eternal, was reduced to the level of the poorest, meanest tribe vanquished and despoiled by an unsparing enemy. Here, as so often, the chosen nation was an emblem of humanity. For though man be by nature the sublimest of God's creatures, when he is abandoned to sin and all its consequences he sinks below the level of the brutes. Only Divine grace and power can restore the beauty and dignity of which sin has robbed humanity. The Gospel of Christ transforms the earthen pitcher into the fine gold of the sanctuary. *T.*

In the dimming of the brightness of the Temple mourning patriots saw an illustration of the shame that had come over the nation, and especially of the degradation of the noblest of the citizens of Jerusalem. But whenever rich gifts and graces of God are corrupted we may echo the same lament, "How is the gold become dim!" The graces of the spiritual life are as finest gold. God counts His people as His jewels (Mal. 3:17). Rare and bright and beautiful, glorious and golden in the sunlight

of God's love, is the character of true saintliness. There is no beauty comparable to the beauty of holiness. But alas! when the saint trails his white robe in the ways of sin and casts the pearls that adorn him to the swine, how is all the glory and beauty degraded! The fallen Christian defiles himself and dims his gold and brings shame on the name of Christ by his sin. *Adeney.*

3-5. These points in the description reveal the horrors of *famine*. Had the mothers of Jerusalem become heartless and cruel like the ostrich forsaking her eggs, that they should cease to furnish them sustenance? Job (chap. 39:13-16) gives the character of the ostrich who "leaveth her eggs on the earth and forgetteth that the foot may crush them; she is hardened against her young ones as though they were not hers." *H. C.*

A more graphic, a more terrible picture than this of the misery of a captured, starved and desolated city no pencil could paint. If the circumstances of the famine-stricken population of Jerusalem are portrayed with too literal a skill and with too sickening an effect, it must be borne in mind that the description is not that of an artist, but of a prophet, and that the aim is not merely to horrify, but to instruct, and especially to represent the frightful consequences involved in a nation's sin and apostasy. *T.*—"The daughter of my people" would not have become cruel if her life had gone on in its ordinary way. But all at once the supplies that have been so regular become uncertain, and at last virtually stop. The cruelty, if in such circumstances it may be truly called so, is an involuntary one. And yet it is not involuntary in this sense, that the state of things was altogether unpreventable. The famine came from disobedience to God. It is stated on authority. It were presuming far too much to trace a connection between particular suffering and particular wrong-doing, but where the connection between particular wrong-doing and particular suffering is made perfectly plain, we shall be very foolish if we do not take heed to it. Whatever wrong thing we do will have some evil consequences, and we know not how soon they may come, how widely they may spread, and how much suffering and difficulty they may bring to the innocent. *Y.*

6. This verse sets forth that the punishment of Jerusalem was more terrible than that of Sodom, because the latter was sudden and transient, while the former was the slow torture of famine and the lingering slaughter of a siege. *H. C.*—God was doing nothing new or inde-

fensible in allowing Jerusalem thus to be wasted and humiliated. The Israelites had in their possession illustrations more than one of how great sin had been followed by great suffering. Jeremiah quotes Sodom, and he might have said something about Egypt when God visited it with the plagues. We must not, of course, press too literally the statement that the sin of Jerusalem was greater than that of Sodom. The prophet's aim is simply to insist that no sin could have been greater than that of Jerusalem. If it was a right and a necessary thing that Sodom should be so suddenly visited, so completely overwhelmed, then assuredly no complaint could be made against the severe treatment experienced by Jerusalem. Indeed, relatively, Jerusalem might think itself very well off. If the height on which Jerusalem stood had sunk in another Dead Sea, there would have been no ground for complaint. No impartial Israelite, looking at the privileges of Israel, considering how much it had been instructed and warned, and how patiently it had been dealt with, could do anything but confess that on the whole it had been mildly visited. Y.

12. On the part of the Jews, this extreme self-confidence came of their strong presumption that the Almighty was on their side and would not let His Temple and His holy name go down before the heathen. Alas, they did not consider that their sins had provoked Him to wrath, so that instead of being their great defender, He must, by virtue of His own eternal attributes, become their terrible destroyer! This precisely was their grand mistake! They had lost the true idea of God as holy and just, and as demanding pure hearts and clean hands in His covenant people, and, moreover, as one who forevermore holds all nations to justice and righteousness, and visits fearful retribution on guilty oppressors. H. C.

The people of Jerusalem had come to rest in the comfortable feeling that their city was reckoned impregnable. Do not let our safety rest in what other people think about us. If our safety is not of God, if it does not rest in trusting Him and obeying Him, then sooner or later that will happen to us in our life which happened to Jerusalem. The walls of our life will be broken down, our most precious treasures taken away, our hearts made desolate. Y.

Jerusalem was deluded by the flattery of her neighbors. When there is a general opinion that all is well it is hard for individual souls to see and feel their danger. In a condi-

tion of worldly ease the prophet of repentance is opposed by the mocking indifference of popular opinion, and souls are lulled to sleep with a hollow security that says, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. The antidote to this dangerous anodyne of conscience must be sought in the Word of God, which speaks of judgment, and warns us to flee from the wrath to come for refuge where only safety can be found—not in the flattery of our neighbors, but at the cross of Christ. *Adeney.*

13, 14. The false prophets and the wicked priests were the chief instigators of that persecution before which some (we know not how many) just men like Urijah (26 : 20-23) fell. For their sins they now wander like blind men in the streets, as men so stained with the innocent blood of victims murdered by their own hand that none could touch their garments. II. C.

Once again, as so often, the prophet and priest stand forth in a shameful revelation. Their life is so contrary to their office. The prophet whose force should have come from the strong righteousness of his heart within and be directed straight against all evil-doers, is found ranging himself with the wicked and making evil put on the semblance of good. And as for the priest, he does holy things with his hands and offers sacrifices for sin, while those whose lives are a continual protest against sin he hates and strives to slay. Not that we must reduce the prophet and the priest here spoken of to the level of vulgar murderers. Doubtless, in many instances, they persuaded themselves they were right and doing God's service. Fanaticism and class feeling, where each one blows the flame of his neighbor's zeal, will urge men on to the greatest atrocities. There may be no danger, most likely there will be no opportunity, that we should go as far as these prophets and priests, but we need to guard against having their narrow spirits in our hearts. We may not shed the blood of the just, but nevertheless we may do much to hinder and trouble them. Y.

14. *The cause of this blindness.* Sin (see verse 13). Priests and prophets had shed the blood of the just. Gross abuse of power and tyrannous violence were iniquities enough to blunt the spiritual vision of the most gifted. This is one of the most terrible fruits of sin. It always tends to deaden conscience and darken the eye of the soul. We must do right if we would see truth. It is not only sensuality, passion and gross worldliness that debase the soul beyond the power of perceiving higher

things, but more spiritual sins—pride, bigotry, self-will, etc.—also blind it. Purity of heart is essential to clearness of vision. *The effect of this blindness.* “They wandered as blind men in the streets.” Darkness of vision leads to confusion in action. We must see clearly that we may walk straightly. A confused conscience will make an uncertain will. Practical truth is not merely a subject for discussion in the seclusion of the study. It is a necessary chart to guide our course by. When the seeing and teaching of this is at fault all life is thrown into helpless disorder.

15. Jerusalem, when in her prosperity she abandoned herself to idolatry and immorality, was more unclean than when she lay in ashes a charnel-house of slaughtered citizens. Yet no man cried, “Unclean!” in the prosperous times. The degradation was thought to be defiling, while the sin which led to it was connived at. This mistake is common in various forms. The criminal with the brand of punishment upon him is shunned, while the far more vicious man who has contrived to keep himself safe is courted. Parents fear the corruption of manners which their children may contract by mingling with social inferiors, and yet permit them to mix with far more corrupt society if only the rank of it be higher than their own. Many people look with contempt on certain kinds of honest business, who will engage in pursuits of very questionable morality without compunction. We want a healthier conscience, that will declare no honest pursuit to be dishonorable and no immoral one to be respectable simply because patronized by rank and fashion. *Adeney.*

17-20. Here the elegy speaks for the masses of the people. Up to the last moment their eyes were looking for some help that proved all in vain. They expected the Egyptians to intervene, but *they* could not save. The enemy hunted them so closely that none were safe in their streets. Clearly, their final end had come! Verse 20 must refer primarily to Zedekiah, then on their throne. They seem to have hoped that the Chaldeans would take him unharmed with themselves into captivity, and allow them to live quietly under him as their king. But he was “taken in their pits,” as a lion or a bear in the pit-holes dug to entrap them, and he found little mercy. How could

they assume so confidently that God would save their nation out of His regard to kings so base and wicked as the last three—apostate offspring of the good Josiah—Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin his son, and Zedekiah. H. C.

17. *Vain help and hope.* When Jerusalem was besieged by the Chaldeans its inhabitants seem to have looked for assistance from their Egyptian neighbors. This was a policy and an expectation displeasing to Jehovah, who ever taught His people to rely, not upon an arm of flesh, but upon the eternal King of righteousness. In this verse the prophet pictures the attitude of the Jews as day after day they strained their weary eyes to catch some glimpse of an approaching deliverer. How striking a picture of the folly and vanity of those hopes which man fixes upon his fellow-man!

18. *The end is come!* The progress of the enemy's works, the approach of the enemy's forces, the frequency of the enemy's assaults, all tended to dishearten the citizens of the besieged Jerusalem. The prophet represents the discouraged and dismayed citizens as gazing with terror upon the assailants and their strategy, and exclaiming in despair, “Our end is come!” The dealing and the discipline of God with the souls of the disobedient and rebellious may well awaken the same conviction and elicit the same cry. T.

21, 22. This address to Edom is keen irony. “Rejoice and be glad” if thou wilt, O Edom; go on! So wilt thou only the more surely seal thy righteous doom! Let Edom exult in our fall, if she will. The wine-cup of God's wrath will come round to her lips all the sooner and the surer; she will be drunken, and will expose herself in her nakedness and filth before all the nations. (See Jer. 25:15-36.) H. C.

It will be a righteous destruction; God will herein visit thine iniquity and discover thy sins; He will punish them, and to justify Himself therein He will discover them, and make it to appear that He has just cause thus to proceed against them. Nay, the punishment of the sin shall so exactly answer the sin that it shall itself plainly discover it. Sometimes God does so visit the iniquity that he that runs may read the sin in the punishment. But, sooner or later, sin will be visited and discovered, and all the hidden works of darkness brought to light. H.

LAMENTATIONS CHAPTER V.

- 5:1 REMEMBER, O LORD, what is come upon us :
 Behold, and see our reproach.
 2 Our inheritance is turned unto strangers,
 Our houses unto aliens.
 3 We are orphans and fatherless,
 4 We have drunken our water for money ;
 Our wood is sold unto us.
 Our mothers are as widows.
 5 Our pursuers are upon our necks :
 We are weary, and have no rest.
 6 We have given the hand to the Egyptians,
 And to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.
 7 Our fathers have sinned, and are not ;
 And we have borne their iniquities.
 8 Servants rule over us :
 There is none to deliver us out of their hand.
 9 We get our bread with the peril of our lives
 Because of the sword of the wilderness.
 10 Our skin is black like an oven
 Because of the burning heat of famine.
 11 They ravished the women in Zion,
 The maidens in the cities of Judah.
- 12 Princes were hanged up by their hand :
 The faces of elders were not honoured.
 13 The young men bare the mill,
 And the children stumbled under the wood.
 14 The elders have ceased from the gate,
 The young men from their music.
 15 The joy of our heart is ceased ;
 Our dance is turned into mourning.
 16 The crown is fallen from our head :
 Woe unto us ! for we have sinned.
 17 For this our heart is faint ;
 For these things our eyes are dim ;
 18 For the mountain of Zion, which is desolate ;
 The foxes walk upon it.
 19 Thou, O LORD, abidest for ever ;
 Thy throne is from generation to generation.
 20 Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever,
 And forsake us so long time ?
 21 Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we
 shall be turned ;
 Renew our days as of old.
 22 But thou hast utterly rejected us,
 Thou art very wroth against us.

Summary of the Book. In the first two chapters of this book the prophet describes principally the calamities of the siege of Jerusalem. In the *third* he deplors the persecutions which he himself had suffered ; though he may in this be *personifying* the city and state, many of his own sufferings being illustrative of the calamities that fell generally upon the city and people at large. The *fourth* chapter is employed chiefly on the ruin and desolation of the city and Temple, and upon the misfortunes of Zedekiah. At the end he speaks of the cruelty of the Edomites, who had insulted Jerusalem in her miseries and contributed to its demolition. These he threatens with the wrath of God. The *fifth* chapter is a kind of *form of prayer* for the Jews in their dispersions and captivity. In the conclusion of it he speaks of their fallen royalty, attributes all their calamities to their rebellion and wickedness, and acknowledges that there can be no end to their misery but in their restoration to the Divine favor. A. C.

Chap. 5. This chapter also is elegiac. The sad state of the Jewish people and of their beloved city is made the ground of their plea

before God for His compassion and restoring mercy.

The whole of this last elegy is in the form of a prayer. Other laments are interspersed with cries to Heaven. This poem is one continuous address to God. We see here true wisdom ; for mere complaining is useless. To wail to the winds is foolish and vain. To make our troubles known to our fellow-men often avails little, for we may only weary them instead of eliciting their pity ; or, if we do succeed in gaining commiseration, that may be of little real use to us. But God is the great Comforter. His ear is ever open to the cry of His distressed children. His heart is always tender to feel compassion for their woes. His hand is strong and willing to work substantial deeds of helpfulness. *Adeney.*

1-3. It is pleasant to see the language and the tone of prayer blended with this strain of bitter lamentation. It may well be our enduring joy that under any affliction, however severe, we may always look prayerfully and hopefully to the hand which visits upon us the affliction. "Come, and let us return to the Lord ;

for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up" (Hos. 6:1). So here the writer brings up before God the desolations and the woes of His people as reasons why He should consider their case and return in His mercy to restore and to save. II. C.

7. *Our fathers have sinned, and are not. Nations cannot be punished in the other world; therefore national judgments are to be looked for only in this life. The punishment which the Jewish nation had been meriting for a series of years came now upon them, because they copied and increased the sins of their fathers and the cup of their iniquity was full. Thus the children might be said to bear the sins of their fathers—that is, in temporal punishment; for in no other way does God visit these upon the children.* (See Ezek. 18:1.) A. C.

The sin of the fathers and the suffering of the children. This chapter is the complaint of those who suffer. "We," "us," "our"—these are the prominent words. The complainers are those who have lost inheritance and houses, become fatherless, and entered into a galling servitude. And now what do they give as the reason of all this terrible experience? This—that "our fathers have sinned." That was an historical fact. The utterances of former prophets, recorded, perhaps, in far greater abundance than we have any idea of, attested the iniquities of past generations. No generation of which there was any record had been without its disobedience. And had it not also been said that the sins of the fathers should be visited on the children? Hence there is plain logic in these words, "Our fathers have sinned . . . and we have borne their iniquities." Great is the suffering in bodily pain, in privation, and in emotion, of every generation; and each generation has a right to say that some, at all events, of this suffering would have been escaped if only preceding generations had lived according to the full law of righteousness. Hence the appeal to us, when self-indulgence presses with all its energies, to consider others. Indulging self, we have to make ready for after-pains; but those pains cannot be kept within the limit of our own lives. But we need to travel round to the other aspects also. There is a difference between retribution and suffering. Some kinds of pain and injury may be inherited to the third and fourth generation, but a guilty conscience belongs to the individual. The worst pains, the worst consequences, and those on which the Saviour looks with the most pity, are surely those coming out of our own wrong doing; and searching into

the connection between the sins of past generations and the suffering of the present one will do harm rather than good if such a searching tends to obscure our own lawlessness, our own want of attention to the requirements of God. There is, indeed, a great difference in kind between the suffering coming on us from the wickedness of others and that which comes from our own. Y.

"We," says the prophet, speaking of himself and of his rebellious and ungodly contemporaries—"we have borne the iniquities of our fathers." The apostasy and rebellion of the former generations were visited upon those who endured the horrors of the siege and the degradation of the Captivity. There is mystery in the providential appointment that not only shall every man bear his own burden, but that some shall bear the burden of those also who have gone before them. But the fact remains, and it gives solemnity to the life of families and of nations. T.

In private life, poverty, disease and disgrace are inherited by children from their parents. Now, it is a sign of the robust truthfulness of the Bible that this dark fact is distinctly recognized. There is no attempt to shun it because it is mysterious. We have in the Bible an honest, brave confronting of the evils of life, and not a system which is only beautiful to contemplate in idea and which cannot be squared with facts.

This fact should not shake our faith in God. Men in all ages have faced it clearly and yet have retained their trust in Providence—*e.g.*, the writers of the Bible. The very idea of faith implies that we must confide and wait in the darkness where we cannot understand. The necessary greatness of the scheme of the government of a world should lead us to expect mysteries in it. *Adeney.*

15-18. All joy and honor have ceased. Alas that we have so grievously sinned!—another wholesome admission that their national sins have brought upon them this desolation. It was peculiarly afflictive to every pious heart that their ever-honored Mount Zion had become so desolate, so abandoned of its former worshippers, that now, instead of men bowing reverently there in worship, the foxes go up and down upon it. H. C.

16. God is righteous, for we have sinned. All our woes are owing to our own sin and folly. If the crown of our head be fallen (for so the words run), if we lose our excellency and become mean, we may thank ourselves—we have by our own iniquity profaned our crown and laid our honor in the dust. H.

16, 17. *The degradation of sin.* The promise of sin is something very different from this; no flattery is untried, no prospect withheld which may induce men to rebel against God. But, as with our first parents, as with the dwellers in Jerusalem, so is it in the experience of all men; the promises which sin makes are unfulfilled; the wages of sin is death. T.

17. *The faint heart and the dim eyes.* Jerusalem had been satisfied with outward things. Wherever it turned there had been enough to satisfy its pride and its pleasure. And now Jehovah, by efficient agents, had taken these outward things away. The difference that had been made in Jerusalem was perceptible to any eye. But another difference could only be known when it was confessed—viz., the difference made in the hearts of the people when their outward circumstances were so completely changed. Proud, resolute men, full of joy in their selfish purposes, found the interest of life completely gone. It would have availed nothing if all these chastisements had ended in leaving the people real Stoics, able to say that it was all the same whether they kept their temporal possessions or lost them. God did not desolate Jerusalem for any delight that he took in this; it was to find a way to humble hearts that were unsubdued after every prophetic appeal. When men are delightedly occupied with the things of sense, then it is a great end gained if, through losses and changes, their hearts become faint and their eyes dim. For then they may accept the ministry of Christ to put into their hearts an energy which will tend for righteousness and direct their eyes to look on the world in the right way. Y.

19-22. Under a sense of human frailty, the passing away of generations and the falling of earthly thrones, it is a relief to the pious heart to turn to God and say: "Thou, Lord, remainest forever; Thy throne from generation to generation." The contrast is refreshing, and inspires hope in the saddest heart, especially when we truly accept this everlasting God as the enduring portion of our souls. H. C.

It will be felt that this prayer is a fitting conclusion to the book. What could be more proper than that these people, having looked all around with an ever-deepening sense of loss and humiliation, should now look above?

Upon earth, in strength or skill of man, there is nothing to be looked for; if anything is to be got it is by looking to heaven. This chapter has had in it the tones of penitence and contrition. It is admitted that the cause of all this desolation is the people's turning away from God. And now there is the petition which results from a full self-discovery. Inward weakness is discovered. The last cry of the book indicates that the turning of men to God is the great thing to be desired. Not a restoration to external possessions and comforts, but a turning to God consequent on His turning to us. The results that come from our being turned to God by His power will one day be seen to justify all the loss and pain needed to bring them about. Y.

19. *Consolation in the supremacy of God.* The Divine supremacy is often regarded as a topic of dread rather than as one of comfort. The awful throne towers above poor humanity, sublime and majestic, and men turn from it to seek refuge at the humbler footstool of mercy. But the writer of this elegy finds deep satisfaction in contemplating the supreme and eternal government of God. *Adeney.*

The eternal throne. The believer in God has this great advantage: he has a firm conviction that all things are under the control and rule of a wise, righteous and benevolent King, who reigns both in heaven and on earth. Afflictions, personal and relative, may distress his mind, calamities may overwhelm his imagination and baffle his reason, but he has this consolation—he knows that the Lord remains forever on His throne. T.

21. *Renewal.* When they do not lead to improvement lamentations are profitless, though they may be unavoidable. It is vain to mourn the past if our grief does not help us to make the future better. Sorrow for sin is good only when it leads to an active repentance. It is therefore necessary that a true consideration of the miserable condition into which evil living has brought us should rouse an earnest desire for a new and better life. The writer does not simply resolve to do better, nor hope that a happier state of affairs will come about of its own accord. He prays, and the object of his prayer is to plead with God to produce the great change which is so much needed. *Adeney.*

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 E. B. Andrews.
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